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Jump Cut was founded as a print publication by John Hess, Chuck Kleinhans, and Julia Lesage in Bloomington, Indiana, and published its first issue in 1974. It was conceived as an alternative publication of media criticism—emphasizing left, feminist, and LGBTQ perspectives. It evolved into an online publication in 2001, bringing all its back issues with it.

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Star Wars

Not so long ago, not so far away

by Dan Rubey

from *Jump Cut*, no. 41, May 1997, pp. 2-12, 130

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[Read original essay, here reprinted from JUMP CUT 18, 1978](#), and followed by a current "Afterword."

AFTERWORD — 1996

The warmest thanks to my old friends Chuck Kleinhans and Julia Lesage and to JUMP CUT for reprinting my STAR WARS essay in conjunction with the re-release of George Lucas' STAR WARS Trilogy by Twentieth-Century Fox/ Lucasfilm. Along with Stephen Spielberg's JAWS (1975), Lucas' STAR WARS (1977) began a new wave of blockbuster films which reshaped Hollywood. The box office grosses of JAWS and STAR WARS showed the studios that they could make more money by using expensive special effects to create mega-hits and selling related promotional items than by spreading production dollars over a larger number of less expensive films. The 1978 essay was to some degree prescient in predicting that trend and analyzing its ideological currents.

JUMP CUT published the essay shortly after the release of what later became the first of the trilogy. STAR WARS was followed by THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK in 1980 and RETURN OF THE JEDI in 1983, both sequels using Lucas' screenplays but directed by Richard Marquand. I overlapped slightly with the editors as graduate students at Indian University in the mid-1970s when they began publishing JUMP CUT. I remember very well the general feeling of excitement about the journal's socialist and feminist perspectives and about the application of those critical lenses to Hollywood films as well as independents, a project which gained momentum with Charlie Eckert's "Shirley Temple and the House of Rockefeller" in the second number.

I was writing a dissertation on medieval romance, analyzing fantasy and desire in Lacanian terms and social structure and historical context in terms of the work of Lucien Goldmann and Pierre Macherey. An analysis of STAR WARS, which consciously used elements of romance and fairy tales, seemed a useful parallel undertaking to teach me how popular culture actually functioned. I still remember with pleasure and appreciation the careful reading the essay received from the JUMP CUT staff, and the many requests for clarification and amplification which I

incorporated.

JUMP CUT was not widely available in those days, and the essay had a brief samizdat career in xerox reproduction. It was reprinted in Peter Steven's *JUMP CUT: Hollywood, Politics and Counter Cinema* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1985). That anthology, drawn from JUMP CUT's first 10 years, was never widely distributed and quickly went out of print. Twenty years later, the two STAR WARS sequels have spelled out the narrative's Oedipal subtext more clearly, identifying Darth Vader as Luke's father and Leia as his sister, and bringing Luke's *Bildungsroman* to final closure of the patriarchal circle with all three of his fathers and teachers smiling down from the eternal bosom of the Force. And, of course, the techniques for the kind of cultural analysis we were attempting then have become smarter and more sophisticated. Despite those later developments, the 1978 essay seems to hold up well. I haven't tried to rewrite it here beyond correcting typos and a sentence or two which no longer seemed clear. I've restored a couple of passages omitted in the anthologized version, but I've kept the book's subheadings and new paragraph breaks, all of which helped to make the original version more readable.

For me, at least, the important thing is to remember that moment in JUMP CUT's early history when what we were doing seemed so new and exciting and full of possibility. I'm very pleased that this reprinting will introduce the essay to a new generation of readers and also make it available through the new technological medium of the Internet. In cyberspace, the JUMP CUT homepage can be as accessible as the STAR WARS website, and this essay and others like it will be far more widely available than any of us could have imagined twenty years ago.

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Blade Runner Skinjobs, humans and racial coding

by Robert Barringer

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Observations and criticism of the urban dystopia in Ridley Scott's *BLADE RUNNER* have focused on its borrowings from film noir, detective fiction, and previous filmic visions of an urban future.[1][[open notes in new window](#)] Much has been made of the city's ethnic diversity (encompassing Asians, Latinos, Arabs, and various non-ethnically marked whites) and its connections to an increasingly outnumbered and threatened white minority. From the film's opening scenes, it establishes ethnic syncretisms; for example, in the way that Deckard describes Gaff's language as "gibberish...city-speak. Gutter talk. A mishmash of Japanese, Spanish, German, what-have-you." To a white viewer, the syncretism may appear both exotic (on screen) and undesirably Other and heterogeneous (in real life).[2] Clearly, the dangerous, dark city dominated by nonwhites and both crowded (at street level) and desolate (in Sebastian's apartment building) marks a middle/upper-class white nightmare, from which those who are able have fled to "a better life" in the off-world colonies. We never see "the better life," but the film's foregrounding of crime, filthy streets, near-constant darkness and rain suggests that the colonies are safe, clean, sunny, and predominantly white. The colonies seem just the latest suburban location for white flight.[3]

From a racial perspective, however, the most interesting aspect of the city is the near-complete absence of blacks: with the exception of two black females at Taffey Lewis' bar, Los Angeles seems entirely emptied of African Americans, or indeed anyone of African descent. From a textual perspective, two possibilities seem plausible: either African Americans have joined the white exodus to the off-world colonies or they have been exterminated. The former is unlikely in light of chronic economic discrimination and ghettoization, and the latter too horrifying to contemplate, though the darkness and despair at the film's heart would not preclude such a genocidal backstory.[4] In any case, given the film's numerous street and crowd scenes (connotatively important to convey the city's varied ethnic makeup), the racial vacuum in the midst of an otherwise diverse population seems an intentional directorial choice. Though the film never explicitly deals with the absence of blacks, among other things it is a film about slavery. Whether African Americans have attained economic power and moved off-world or have been eliminated by a fearful white government, they are no longer available to fill the social and economic functions assigned them. Industrial societies need workers to

do unpleasant jobs, and in the absence of a cheap (black) labor force, the film's industrial society has created a new artificial racial underclass: replicants.

Given the history of slavery in the United States, any new race of U.S. slaves would be immediately comparable to African American slaves on the basis of forced labor alone. *BLADE RUNNER* goes further, using cultural stereotypes to code the replicants as black, and the humans as white. A close reading of the film shows a remarkably consistent pattern of racial coding that makes *BLADE RUNNER* an important and powerful commentary on U.S. race relations.

The first time we hear of the replicants, the racist police captain Bryant calls them "skinjobs." In the voice-over narration, Deckard explains the term and describes Bryant as "the kind of cop who used to call black men niggers." [5] Thus, from the beginning the replicants are explicitly compared to blacks, at least in how racists see them. Throughout, even sympathetic humans treat replicants like property, valuing them even less than animals: most of the questions on the Voight-Kampff test are designed to elicit empathy for animals, not people. [6] "Replicants are like any other machine," Deckard tells Rachael. "They're either a benefit or a hazard. If they're a benefit, it's not my problem." Later, Deckard tells Rachael the spider story (an event from her programmed "memory" which she had assumed to be real) as if he's reprogramming a faulty computer, not expecting any emotional response from a machine. When the machines behave incorrectly, they are "retired" without a thought for their potential humanity. Ironically, replicants built to be "more human than human" in theory are considered far less than human in practice. The racial parallels are obvious, from the legal designation of slaves as 3/5 of a person to the car crash scene in Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*, in which someone asks "Was anybody hurt?" "No," the answer comes. "Nigger got killed."

A slave system must have masters, and *BLADE RUNNER* features two: Tyrell and Sebastian. Though Tyrell is a "bad massa" and Sebastian a "good massa," the inherent inequality of master/slave power relations forces both to treat replicants as things. Of course, the film puts an added twist on the relation by making Tyrell and Sebastian not only masters but also their slaves' creators, paradoxically increasing the closeness they feel to their creations while reinforcing the creator's distance: if I made it, it must be a thing. [7] Tyrell, the "god of biomechanics" (conflating religion and science) boasts that he cares only for commerce, forcing his creations to do dangerous and undesirable work. Sebastian, on the other hand, literally "makes friends" with his slaves, yet he constructs them as inferior physically and mentally to him. Though Sebastian is a sympathetic character, his loneliness, innocence, and kindness mitigate but do not excuse his participation in the slave system and his treatment of his slaves as objects. When he discovers that Roy and Pris are replicants, he asks not, "Let me understand you," but rather, "Show me something." To Sebastian, these two replicants are only an interesting application of genetic design and engineering. Roy can barely mask his anger and contempt when he first enters Sebastian's apartment, saying, "Boy, you've got some nice toys here." Batty sees them for what they are: inferior models of himself; they could have been as smart and strong as he is if engineered differently. Though Sebastian does not consciously realize it, his "friends" are nothing more than mobile ornamentation, 21st century lawn jockeys. Roy kills Sebastian both because the replicant's overflowing rage is not sated by Tyrell's murder and because Sebastian is complicit in the system which demands that replicants slave and die.

Despite parallels between the treatment of replicants and of African Americans, it could be argued that any slave system will have characteristics similar to all other slave systems and that the replicants do not necessarily correspond to U.S. black slaves in particular. Leaving aside the fact that *BLADE RUNNER* is an U.S. film set in an U.S. city, thus making U.S. themes and history its most likely cultural antecedents, the replicants exhibit behaviors and attributes specifically coded black. As a group, they are both physically and sensually/sexually superior to human beings, fictional traits that tie in perfectly with the national mythology of the oversexed, physically "gifted" black.

Furthermore, each individual replicant fits loosely a particular black substereotype. Leon, a nuclear fission loader, corresponds to the marginally-skilled industrial worker, whose historical antecedent is a field hand (unemployed, he's a street thug). Somewhat stupid (his mental level is "C," lower than any of the others) and prone to sudden violence, he represents for the popular imagination the rage of the undereducated black male. Further indicative of Leon's blackness is that he snaps when Holden asks him about his mother: neither blade runner Holden (because he is white) nor Leon himself (because he has "grown up" without understanding the racial tradition he belongs to) know how to play the dozens.

Zhora is a prostitute retrained as an assassin, who then hides on Earth as an entertainer, working as a stripper at Taffey Lewis's sleazy club. Pris, a "standard pleasure model," is also a prostitute, and she dresses like it to ensnare Sebastian: dog collar, heavy makeup, and fur coat over a miniskirt and fishnet stockings. Roy is the smart, militant leader, following in the tradition of John Brown and Malcolm X. Finally, Rachael is an "Oreo," successful at pretending to be white/human because she has been manufactured to believe she is. All are specific black types present in the popular U.S. media and imagination for at least the last century.

Because the replicants are made white-skinned, they have fewer problems "passing" than they would if they had been designed as black, hence the necessity of the Voight/ Kampff test. As might be expected from a fugitive slave movie, though, *BLADE RUNNER* has many scenes where passing is a subtext. Both Voight/Kampff interviews figure prominently; most important passing gives Rachael a context for questioning the test's efficacy on humans. Chew and Sebastian both see through the replicants' actions, with Sebastian commenting, "You're so different. You're so perfect." Leon tries to pass as human to infiltrate the Tyrell corporation, and in the climactic scene Pris acts as one of Sebastian's toys (an obedient slave) to hide from Deckard. Like any oppressed minority, the replicants find it easier to pass and pretend, though unlike most African Americans, the replicants have a choice.

Of course, for any racial coding to exist, it must have a counterpart, usually in the form of a binary. In other words, blackness must set itself in contrast to whiteness and vice-versa. The replicants cannot be coded black without the humans being coded white. As Richard Dyer points out, whiteness remains hard to identify precisely because its power depends on "seeming not to be anything in particular." A logical corollary to white lack of particularity must then be "emptiness, absence, denial, or even a kind of death" (141), qualities that fit *BLADE RUNNER*'s human beings exactly. In contrast to the replicants' sinuous vitality, Holden acts in a businesslike way, Bryant coldly and cynically, and Sebastian timidly. Tyrell is

calculating and manipulative, gauntly fastidious and completely asexual.[8] And when Deckard introduces himself via narration, he reports that his ex-wife's nickname for him is "sushi-cold fish."

Whiteness is thus represented as "order, rationality, [and] rigidity," and as a quality, it comes out only in relation to black/replicant "disorder, irrationality, and looseness" (Dyer 145). One of the film's many ironies is that Deckard, the cold fish, hunts people who aren't human enough; yet the hunted are truly alive in a way the human characters cannot approach. In the chess game Sebastian and Tyrell play, Batty takes a risk which Sebastian will not and thus wins the game, allowing him access to Tyrell's inner sanctum. In the subsequent confrontation between creator and created, Roy sweats and breathes heavily while Tyrell is calm and controlled like a machine, at least until the moment Roy kills him. Later in the climactic chase scene, Batty howls in sorrow for his dead companions, then clowns playfully, toying with Deckard in a way that would be unimaginable for the blade runner. Roy's instructions to Deckard take the form of clichés, mocking Deckard's laconic manner, but Roy's words are polysemic and multilayered in contrast to Deckard's flat, reportorial style. "If you don't play," Batty tells him, "you can't win," and later he commands Deckard, "Show me what you're made of." The replicant seems to challenge the human to prove his humanity, to show emotion, to take risks and truly to come alive by living in fear. "That's what it is to be a slave," Batty tells him.

Batty's instructions to Deckard form the last stage of the teaching process begun by Rachael: by the end of the film Deckard has accepted the replicants as human and become more human himself in the process. His border-crossing parallels both Roy's (who becomes more emotional as the odds against Roy and his fellow escapees get longer) and Rachel's, who is as cold and controlled as any of the humans until she finds out she isn't what she thought she was. Her switch from white to black, human to replicant, is cinematically coded by her hairstyle, which remains fixed in a tight bun until she accepts her replicant status and lets her hair fall naturally.

Significantly, both Deckard and Rachael have not only emotional but sexual awakenings. Just as Deckard should not feel pity when "retiring" replicants (but does), he should not fall in love with one. Although Rachael is played by Sean Young, a white actress, her pairing with Harrison Ford's Deckard is coded as interracial taboo. In its casting, the film resembles most previous interracial Hollywood romances, which almost always featured white actresses playing Asians, Arabs, and Latinas. However, in this film the white male protagonist, Deckard, changes his thinking to assimilate to the racialized female Other instead of vice-versa.[9] Since Deckard functions as the audience's main source of identification and point of entry into the film, the audience is encouraged to change its understanding with him, accepting the replicants as truly human.

Like most Hollywood films, *BLADE RUNNER* elides ethnicity even as it seems to deal specifically with it. It is typical that when directors do not want to wrestle with race, they "escape" the issue by making all the characters white and thus visibly unmarked. I do not believe that this was the case with *BLADE RUNNER*. Undoubtedly Hollywood economics led to casting all white actors as the replicants, but the same argument cannot explain the absence of black faces in crowd scenes. This is a film about slavery in which the slaves are coded black, a film which flaunts

its vision of a multi-ethnic metropolis, shot in Los Angeles where there is no shortage of African American actors or indeed actors of any ethnicity. The replicants, we must conclude, function as replacements for blacks, whose absence (by whatever means, fair or foul) has made it economically desirable and politically feasible to construct a new race of slaves. Only this time, the technocrats think, we'll get it right: we'll program them with a four-year life span to keep them from getting uppity. Even better, we'll make them white.

Replicants are the bastards of the white world, their powerful bodies and minds perversely designed to fulfill white fears of/desires for blacks. We might think of replicants as a screen upon which white fears and desires are projected, reproduced in flesh "more human than human." Replace "human" in that sentence with "nigger," and the genetic designers' intentions become clear. Unsurprisingly, a fearful white technocracy constructs its new race of slaves "better," meaning white-skinned and blonde. Thus, though Scott's casting decisions probably made his film more palatable to the white majority audience, it paradoxically also makes *BLADE RUNNER* more racially complex and subversive.

NOTES

1. Both Gray and Carper focus on the detective/film noir angle, while Desser compares *BLADE RUNNER* to, among others, *METROPOLIS*, *THINGS TO COME*, and *SOYLENT GREEN*.
2. Though positing "the white viewer" is problematic, the film clearly plays on white guilt, fears, and desires.
3. Barr makes reference to the mechanisms of racism in the film, but focuses on "speciesism" as an alternative to racism.
4. Philip K. Dick's *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* posits a future in which African Americans have been involuntarily sterilized and/or limited by law to one child per couple. The decrease in the U.S. black population makes them unthreatening curiosities in the popular imagination, as Native Americans are now. Though he doesn't suggest such government intervention in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, clearly Dick had thought about the form an American "final solution" might take.
5. Though most critics prefer the director's cut, which deletes Deckard's noir-homage narration, I make no distinction between the versions for the purposes of this paper. One reason the studio insisted on the narration in the original release was to clarify the action, clarification Scott thought was unnecessary. Nevertheless, the narration was added, but only to explain what was already there — hence my willingness to use it.
6. And, as Barr points out, the original Dick story includes the "murder" of a goat, a scene which brings a greater emotional response from both Deckard and the readers than any "retirement" of a replicant (Barr 25).
7. The master-as-creator trope also resonates with the historical conditions of U.S. slavery, in which many of the master's slaves were also his children.

8. Tyrell's frosty asexuality does not preclude his coding as gay. His meticulous dress and rococo art-filled apartment are pitched halfway between expensive taste and camp. Also, he flutters his fingers effeminately when he asks Deckard how many questions it normally takes to identify a replicant. Tyrell fits in a long tradition of gay representations in film noir, like Cairo in *THE MALTESE FALCON*, Lindsay in *FAREWELL MY LOVELY*, and Brandon and Philip in *ROPE* (Dyer, "Homosexuality and Film Noir" 60). In *BLADE RUNNER* Tyrell's gayness functions to provide another level of complexity in regard to the replicants: if he is gay, he cannot procreate but he can manufacture, with deadly results for him. Batty kills him after sharing an incestuous/homoerotic kiss, making sure Tyrell can manufacture no more.

9. Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* provides excellent commentary on film miscegenation and assimilation. See especially "Erotic Allegories" (230-31) and "Rape and the Rescue Fantasy" (156-161).

WORKS CONSULTED

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Electronic Eros

Imagining difference at the interface

by Amy Wegener

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Review of *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age*
by Claudia Springer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996. 182
pages.

In current theoretical debates about identity and subjectivity, the idea that culturally regulated signs of difference construct or inscribe bodies has provided a way of thinking about issues of gender, race, and sexuality. For instance, by dismantling the assumption that categories such as "male" and "female" are natural, writers in a variety of disciplines explore identity as a social process rather than a given. They face a complex task since they also wish to validate gendered and racial positions as locations from which to speak about experience. In this context, "the body" becomes a hot topic. Some discourses even assess physicality's meanings by imagining a world without bodies as we know them — a theoretical playground in which difference can be manipulated, and the borders between individual subjects collapse. But such a scenario does not belong solely to lofty academic theory.

Claudia Springer illustrates in *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* how a variety of popular culture texts explore such mind/body possibilities. These texts fantasize the fusion of human bodies and technology or technology's eventual erasure of corporeal experience altogether. Springer's book covers a broad spectrum of science and science fiction texts which imagine such conditions — from artificial intelligence debates to science fiction films and from ideas about the future of virtual reality to cyberpunk comic strips. She takes her reader through a maze of fantasies about utopian and dystopian worlds in which bodies are no longer the discrete (or, quite often, discreet), fundamentally "human" entities we once believed them to be.

The book's six chapters sometimes seem more intent upon synthesizing examples than articulating a strategy for understanding what these fantasies mean or how they might intervene in recent conversations about the body and identity. However, *Electronic Eros* has several philosophical preoccupations which drive Springer's inquiry. Her central discovery is that these futuristic fictions are riddled with contradictions — particularly in terms of gender. Not only is the need to imagine experience as bodily not so easily effaced, but popular culture often

envisions technologized bodies which reassert or intensify the physicality of the inferior human bodies they replace. The result is hypermasculine cyborgs, gendered computer intelligences, virtual sex, or cyberspace "cowboys," whose greatest asset is their ability to manipulate the visual (virtual) presentation of their bodies. In Springer's analysis, these imagined body/technology fusions fluctuate between upsetting the rigidity of Cartesian mind-body dualism and reinscribing the oppositions they seem to challenge (for instance, by assuming a consciousness separated from the body).

Springer offers compelling hypotheses. Regrettably, she sometimes fails to go beyond positing contradictions to speculate about what the contradictions say about us or what kind of cultural work they do. Perhaps because the book explores escapist technological dreams and nightmares, Springer sometimes slips into the very "cyberdrol" (a rhetoric of celebration which ignores questions of ideology, existing political structures, and social relations) she warns against, occasionally becoming immersed in the alluringly slippery scenarios she seeks to examine. The book provides a thoughtful, readable synthesis of many different writers and analysts of this kind of rhetoric, but it doesn't always push the issue of what's at stake in thinking about such fictive challenges to our models of consciousness.

Electronic Eros explores another central thesis about how the body rematerializes in these fantasies. While hidden electronic technologies take over from older industrial models of powerful machines, some popular culture works resist this change and continue to conceptualize human/ technological fusion as something visible, external, and bodily. Science-fiction film's cyborg provides Springer's most salient example. The cyborg's overdetermined signifiers of bodily strength, masculinity, and violent tendencies seem to assert technology's danger in a way that is coded as physically menacing. At the same time, texts about electronic technology — such as Jim Starlin and Diana Graziunas' 1992 novel *Lady El*, about a dead woman whose brain is hooked up to a computer system — continue to imagine disembodied, downloaded consciousness as gendered, racialized, and capable of sexual desire, qualities which seem apt for someone in possession of a body. In fact, the initial opposition — "man of steel is bad" vs. "electronic fluidity is good" — which Springer first establishes begins to unravel because of all the "postindustrial" examples she offers, examples which depict existence in the electronic realm as dependent upon bodily difference.

Springer's narrative grapples energetically with distinctions between and resonances among a variety of popular representations. However, her analysis is less convincing when observing the ways in which the texts' paradoxical claims might both reinforce and disrupt assumptions about gender. Initially, she asserts that electronic technology is associated with "femininity" while industrial technology is coded "masculine." While Springer provides a good account of how the metaphor of fluidity and hidden circuitry (female) stands in contrast to the solidity of, say, the Schwarzenegger-esque cyborg (male), she relies heavily on the rigidity of dualisms in her own readings, even though many of the texts she describes seem to play with these oppositions and to evade easy classifications. Springer privileges the electronic "feminine" model of technology over the "masculine." She cites Donna Haraway's idea of the feminist cyborg as a way of imagining subjectivity in terms of transgressed boundaries and "permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints." [1] The book could be clearer

about how it employs this kind of theoretical stance.

Springer's criticism of her science fiction examples tends to assume that the "feminine" is more "feminist," even though she recognizes that electronic technology's promise of dissolving boundaries between subjects (a "feminized" condition) is often depicted as threatening. Furthermore, in these dystopian visions, electronic technology's invisibility often becomes insidious rather than empowering. Springer makes clear the electronic mode's theoretical potential, but her book lacks a clear vision for how popular culture might be (or fails to be) progressive by adopting this way of thinking. Relentlessly pitting the idea of "patriarchal" representations against the promise of "feminist" ones, the book's critical discussion occasionally falters when confronted with examples that can be read in several different ways. Part of the problem may be the author's desire to label texts themselves as "feminist" or not, rather than to position herself as a feminist reader of the texts' ambiguities. Springer highlights contradictions and begins to speculate about what they could mean more generally. For instance, bodies become steely, or desire is displaced into "a computerized electronic realm" because with the presence of dangers such as AIDS, bodies are vulnerable as never before (10). However, she could go further in following her hunches about what investigating these texts could provide as a "payoff."

Springer's introduction promises such speculation, emphasizing a historical link between technology and eroticism and establishing the paradox that in the popular imagination, technology evokes both "a future of heightened erotic fulfillment" and "threats of extinction" (8 and 11). In this vein, the first chapter, "Deleting the Body," starts to ask why these fantasies prevail. Surprisingly, one of the first discourses that Springer discusses is scientific writing on artificial intelligence, which she suggests does not differ much from science fiction on the same topic. Artificial intelligence is described in these texts as more and more like human consciousness — and vice versa. It becomes hard to tell whether technology might protect the body in its state of vulnerability or whether it is the threat that renders the body ever more expendable. The chapter also begins to articulate how some of these scientific concerns are played out in various fictions (the cyborg, cyberpunk), mapping out terrain covered in later sections and showing how fictional constructs raise important questions about the authenticity of "the human" as a category distinct from "the machine."

Springer wraps up the chapter by outlining Fredric Jameson's definition of postmodernism and briefly discussing feminism's contention that gender roles are constructed by culture. She very usefully brings up the issue of how recent work exposes ideological assumptions about science's "objectivity," but then she ends this section on an alarmist, sensationalistic note: "After all, it may be too late to reject the cyborg existence. We are all already jacked in" (49). Such a deterministic rhetorical flourish left me wondering how Springer defines relations between popular fantasies and social and political realities. Such seductive speculations dangerously posit change as inevitable rather than as a cultural process. This rhetoric is also imprecise about how ideas and anxieties circulate — as when Springer later locates "us" in the "new postmodern social order" (100). What is this new order like, and do we have any agency here? I suspect that Springer is thinking of Donna Haraway's claim that the political always hinges on strategic fictions, and that lived experience shapes and is shaped by the imagination. As Haraway writes,

"This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion." [2] Although Springer begins intelligently to sketch out the implications of Haraway's concept applied to a study of popular science and recent science fiction texts, at times *Electronic Eros* only gestures toward a more rigorous consideration of how this equation works.

In Chapters Two and Three, Springer convincingly demonstrates how the body reemerges in texts which deal with abandoning the body and escaping into an electronic world: cyberpunk comics and writing on virtual reality. In "The Pleasure of the Interface," Springer describes cyberpunk fictions, which paradoxically present losing the body as a sexual experience. Cyberpunk does present the possibility of trying on different genders and sexualities, but cyberpunk comics visually depict bodies conventionally coded "masculine" and "feminine." Springer vividly assesses this imagined realm — how it alters definitions of human consciousness, and what its limitations and contradictions are. She questions how this potentially subversive subcultural discourse challenges traditional ideas about the body and identity. She finds that these comics show us the process of constructing and reconstructing images of bodies, but their iconography also adheres to stereotypical representations of gender.

Analyzing similar questions, "Virtual Sex" looks at the status of virtual reality in the popular (and scientific) imagination and finds that this "alternate reality" is also often associated with sexual pleasure that is thought to reach new heights of intensity even though it is no longer "bodily" (again, this raises the question of what embodied consciousness is). Springer briefly considers critics of VR's escapism and the troubling dilemma of who will control this technology. The chapter also introduces the potential terror of blurred subjectivity with a brief analysis of the film *LAWNMOWER MAN*, arguing that the title character's violence is a response to the threat which "feminized" subjectivity poses to the borders of his body when his intelligence is enhanced using virtual reality as "therapy." The idea of the "postmodern subject," then, as imagined in these texts, is at once potentially liberating and destructive. Springer juxtaposes many opinions on the dangers and benefits of VR technologies. Even though her own position sometimes takes a backseat to the debates she synthesizes, the questions she raises here will be quite helpful to anyone thinking about the potential impact of virtual reality or its current existence in popular fiction.

The second half of *Electronic Eros* examines representations of "cybernetic" men and women, as Springer continues to develop her concern with the gendering of the body/ technology interface. Chapter Four, "Muscular Circuitry," argues that "mainstream films have privileged the violently masculinist figure" (96), citing *THE TERMINATOR* and *ROBOCOP* as primary examples. These kinds of representations are bad, says Springer, because they resist the aforementioned "new postmodern social order" and exude nostalgia for unchallenged male supremacy. She pits the action-hero-cyborg's masculinity against a more fluid, electronic model of femininity, asserting that bodies of the Schwarzenegger variety can be read as "patriarchal" and even "fascist." As at other moments in the book, it's not quite clear here whether Springer is assuming that electronic technologies inherently have feminist potential or whether they are portrayed as "feminized" in popular culture for particular reasons. Interestingly, this categorization also proves unstable in other examples, as Springer discovers that bodiless intellect is

sometimes gendered male while the material, biologically reproductive body is associated with the female.

Springer further complicates this familiar take on the "phallic" cyborg in the last part of the chapter by considering *EVE OF DESTRUCTION*, a film whose violent yet "sexy" cyborg character seems to play on both "masculine" and "feminine" representations of technology by combining a steely female body, unpredictable hidden circuitry, and the programmed memories of the scientist who created her. This example usefully challenges the argument set up so far, but rather than refining the chapter's initial assumptions, Springer fluctuates between reading the film as "misogynistic" (because Eve's behavior suggests the danger of unleashed female sexuality) and as a "feminist revenge fantasy" (because Eve kills abusive men). I think Springer is on target when she concludes,

"The ambiguities and contradictions surrounding the issues of sexual difference and reproduction/destruction are part of what makes these films compelling" (120).

However, she struggles to elucidate these ambiguities by discussing them in terms of an "either-or" opposition which (as Springer notices) doesn't quite account for what the film is doing. Though I have trouble agreeing that the film's "angry woman on a rampage" theme necessarily makes it a feminist text, I do think that what Springer does here, with some success, is to attempt a feminist reading of its problems.

Chapter Five, "Digital Rage," continues the inquiry by discussing similarly muscular-but-sexy cybernetic women enacting revenge fantasies in cyberpunk comics. The previous chapter's discussion of the tendency of repressed "human" memory to surface in film cyborgs also provides a springboard for talking about the idea of downloading human consciousness and memory and what this hypothetically would do to our notion of discrete identities and to the markers of difference that determine sex, gender, and race. Expanding her earlier point that the human mind is increasingly being likened to a computer — and that artificial intelligence's success is predicated on its ability to duplicate human memory — Springer also shows that scientific and science-fiction visions are often not so far apart.

The book's final chapter, "Men and Machine-Women," continues to look at what happens when technology is gendered female; here Springer analyzes the 1992 television series *MANN AND MACHINE*. She frames her discussion of machine women by setting up a comparison between Eve Edison, the series' cyborg, and the robot Maria in Fritz Lang's 1926 film *METROPOLIS*. In discussing the television series' gender politics, Springer focuses on whether or not the show might "articulate a feminist position" (156). She finds that the representation of Eve, the intelligent yet naive and dependent cyborg character, relies upon socially imposed rules. Eve's tendency to adopt certain behaviors under the supervision of her male partner on the police force constructs her as female. As with *EVE OF DESTRUCTION*, the text's contradictions seem to resist Springer's desire to tidy them, though the struggle often produces sharp insights about the TV series' specific features. Oddly, the comparison with Lang's robot Maria — originally an attempt to see "how the figure of the mechanical woman has evolved" (146) — seems to drop out of the chapter. The reader may wonder exactly what leverage

Springer is trying to get on the contemporary text via the juxtaposition. The chapter makes some interesting suggestions about depicting technologized female bodies, but if there is a cultural trajectory between the silent film and the television show, this angle remains loosely developed.

Springer's conclusion about MANN AND MACHINE — and, in fact, her conclusion about many of the representations discussed in the book — is that it reveals gender identity to be constructed but does not challenge the construction itself:

"MANN AND MACHINE thus illustrates a textual practice of supporting a dominant ideology without trying to justify or naturalize it on the basis of any 'truth' (160).

Though drawing a distinction between the "support" and the "naturalization" of ideology seems questionable to me, it is provocative to think the series both destabilizes and is ultimately constrained by the cultural assumptions it manipulates. Springer's apparent dissatisfaction left me wondering what she would find a more progressive strategy. My question was soon answered with her book's conclusion:

"Alternatively, perhaps we can still anticipate the pleasure of a new beginning, one in which technology will become part of an egalitarian social configuration and inequalities will be rejected as anachronisms from a bygone age that was merely human." (161)

As colorfully optimistic as this ending may be, it ignores the persistence of ideology as a process, favoring instead a vision of sudden transformation after which we can simply escape the social systems and histories which have shaped us. Furthermore, as Vivian Sobchack warns when cited earlier in the book,

"If we don't keep this subjective kind of bodily sense in mind as we negotiate our technoculture, then we.. will objectify ourselves to death" (7).

Moreover, Springer's utopian pronouncement seems to undermine what may be one of the book's finest points: that what science fiction and cyberpunk discourses reveal in their anxiety-laden, often frightening visions is that boundaries require policing and that identity always gets reconfigured as difference written onto the body. That is true not just for these fantasies but maybe also for us. In other words, perhaps it is because the texts do not imaginatively dismantle existing cultural assumptions that they succeed in revealing what these limitations and preoccupations are as well as hint at why they persist. The book makes a convincing case for this scenario even if on another level it occasionally seems to call for sudden ideological transcendence.

Electronic Eros implicitly succeeds in advancing an argument, which I have perhaps taken for granted, about the importance of studying these kinds of texts and the meanings they generate. In fact, the book shows that popular culture can fuel a discussion about some of the most pressing theoretical issues we face. Springer demonstrates a vast knowledge of both pop-culture forms and scientific writing, often putting them together in surprising ways to illustrate their common obsessions. To her credit, the book delves into difficult philosophical conundrums

and still remains an accessible resource for students and newcomers to these debates. It encourages a diverse readership to think about the ways in which gendered technologies and technologized genders are represented (even theorized) in popular texts. Sometimes the book's strategy may frustrate other readers, but even those who argue with some of Springer's analysis will find her approach to the subject matter compelling. As I hope that this review suggests, this book should inspire lively discussions among those thinking about technology and the body, opening up key questions about what these recurring representations mean.

NOTES

1. See Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 154.
2. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," p. 149.

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Introduction

Contradictions of sexual representation

by Chuck Kleinhans

from *Jump Cut*, no. 41, May 1997, p. 20

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Simple binary ways of thinking about sexuality and representation frame issues of sex, gender, and difference in ways that appear increasingly confusing and unproductive. Continuing a discussion of sexual representation from our last issue (Special Section: Studying Sexual Images, JC 40, pp. 102-136), we present several articles which move the discourse in the direction of grasping contradictions which change in history.

Peter Lehman's analysis of the controversy surrounding THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT underlines the way the public discussion is framed within the simple opposition First Amendment/pornography, where both sides understand the term pornography as intrinsically evil. Neither side of the debate, when phrased this way, allows one to ask or explore what pornography is, what its means of expression are, and how it appeals to sexual desire and curiosity. And, most important, how it is like mainstream cultural practices. To admit that set of questions is to open deeper issues of how art and the media represent sex, race, and class, and how audiences are emotionally invested and corporate structures are financially invested in such representation.

On college campuses and in other forums, an educational show presenting the dangers of pornography (and more recently the pleasures of pornography) has become a recognizable mode for conveying anti-pornography positions. Yet, as Eithne Johnson describes these presentations, both directly debating the issue pro and con or simply implying the existence (and danger) of the opposite view continue a binary logic. The anti-porn argument assumes polar opposites which lead to simple acceptance/rejection behavior rather than more complex understanding of the issues involved in industrially produced sexual images. In contrast, sex positive speaker Suzie Bright promotes a diversity of porn and readings of it. Anti-porn arguments fall back on assuming an evil porn and an acceptable erotic, but can never actually bring forward a comparison of examples. To look at the "difference" would reveal actual differences in how people read sexual images and indicate how heavily the "acceptable" is locked within class- and education-bound notions of good taste and aesthetic discrimination.

Such questions of taste and proper framing of sex images are at the core of producing self-improvement sex-education videos. Robert Eberwein explores the

self-help genre and its marketing. A quintessential U.S. phenomenon, the tapes repeat the "education as alibi" pattern of hardcore's emergence above ground in the 1970s. The tapes go to great lengths to provide a safe justification for voyeurism by linking it to U.S. values of education and self-improvement.

In her new book, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, Laura Kipnis explores the transgressive boundaries of porn today: cops' policing the Internet, transvestite porn, the body in "fat porn," and *Hustler* as a class-offensive attack on middle class norms. In his review of this book, Eric Schaefer finds the analysis redefines the porn discussion precisely by insisting on how similar porn is to other cultural expressions. Kipnis concludes that pornography opens a space which allows for fantasy unrestricted by the social and political limits of the normative order.

In JUMP CUT 40 Laura Marks considers independent films and tapes which complexly move across boundaries, exploiting differentials in new ways ("Straight Women, Gay Porn, and the Scene of Erotic Looking"). A similar concern for works by innovative artists and how they have pushed beyond binary logic is at the heart of Chris Straayer's groundbreaking new book *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies*. Reviewing the Straayer book, Jane Gaines finds it bends genre categories back on themselves by taking up avant garde works which break formal conventions and content taboos to explore contradictions of sex and gender. Rather than remaining frozen in polar opposites, Straayer's analysis promotes seeing the world as deeply contradictory, employing a both/and understanding of difference in material and ideological terms over time, subject to historical change.

Such an understanding begins to move us beyond the limits of the people *versus* Larry Flynt to consider how Flynt is another backwoods boy made good, a self-made millionaire who figured out a successful marketing strategy to an U.S. audience. Beyond the hero/demon binary, Flynt appears as an exemplary cultural producer, embodying the success myth so dear to conservatives, and his historical figure is in need of a more sophisticated analysis. Sexual representation is changing. Developing an analysis of how and why those changes are taking place means moving beyond binary distinctions.

The People vs. Larry Flynt Will the real Larry Flynt please stand up?

by Peter Lehman

from *Jump Cut*, no. 41, May 1997, pp. 21-26

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When Milos Forman accepted the 1997 Golden Globe best director award for *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT*, he said he had "never bought a copy" of *Hustler* magazine, adding, "nor will I. I'm in agreement with the people who say *Hustler* is tasteless" ("Hollywood Dresses Up").

Much as the end of the classical cinema frequently mirrors the beginning in a bookend fashion, Forman's pronouncement recalled similar statements given before the film was even made. As soon as the film's production was announced, Forman's comments about pornography in general, and *Hustler* in particular, appeared in the media. Forman made it clear that he had never bought a copy of *Hustler* and had no use for pornography. His interest in pornography, he said, was solely confined to its historical social and political ramifications. He noticed that when the Nazi's and totalitarian regimes rose to power their first book burnings targeted pornography, thus his attraction to a film about Larry Flynt appeared to be tied to Flynt's legal battles. As Forman bluntly put it at the Golden Globe ceremonies, "The film is about the First Amendment." In a self-satisfied manner, Forman threw pornography aside while making a film defending the rights of "tasteless" pornographers like Larry Flynt. More about "tastelessness" later.

Critic Frank Rich, among many others, was quite taken by Forman's point of view. He found the First Amendment issue in the film so compelling that he devoted one of his *New York Times* columns to the film after it premiered at the 1996 New York Film Festival. In turn, the film's promotional people found Rich's defense so compelling that they reprinted it in its entirety in a pre-release ad campaign which included *New Yorker* magazine. Rich fully capitulates to Forman, declaring, "To understand why this movie has been made now, and with such urgency, one need only listen to its director, Milos Forman" (55). He then goes on to quote Forman talking about the manner "in which Nazis and Communists began by attacking pornography" (55).

Even though Forman publicly disassociated himself from porn, *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT* nevertheless drew the ire of anti-porn feminists. In a widely reprinted piece that initially appeared on the *New York Times* Op-Ed page entitled "Hollywood Cleans Up Hustler," Gloria Steinem strongly attacked Forman's

championing of Flynt. In no uncertain terms she stated,

"First, we need to make clear that a pornographer is not a hero, no more than a publisher of Ku Klux Klan books, or a Nazi on the Internet would be."

One of Steinem's main charges is that the film cleans up *Hustler*: "

What's left out are the magazine's images of women being beaten, tortured and raped, women subject to degradations from bestiality to sexual slavery."

Steinem also challenges the manner in which the film has cleaned up Larry Flynt, who she points out has been accused of child molestation by his daughter. Furthermore, she states, "Unlike his film character, the real Larry Flynt is hardly an unwavering advocate of free speech." Her evidence here is the fact that Flynt has viciously attacked her and other feminists in a degrading manner in *Hustler*.

Indeed, the day before her Op-Ed piece was published, Steinem appeared along with Susan Brownmiller and Tonya Flynt, Larry Flynt's daughter, at a news conference sponsored by the National Organization for Women. They and others "labeled Flynt a pornographer" ("Flynt's Daughter"). Tonya Flynt finds the film "a pack of lies" and charges,

"He doesn't give a damn about freedom of speech ...all he cares about is making millions of dollars out of the sexual exploitation of women and children."

These extra-textual discourses about the film position spectators either to deplore the film for whitewashing pornography and Larry Flynt or to praise its vigorously defending the First Amendment. Although I reject both positions, I find they share a common attitude towards pornography: Milos Forman doesn't like pornography anymore than Gloria Steinem. He defends pornographers' rights since the only alternative seems to live in a frightful, totalitarian society which protects no one's rights. In a sense Forman is anti-porn, but he prefers to live in a society where pornographers are free to practice their "tasteless" business while he is free to ignore it.

The film received a great deal of critical praise. The critical discourse tends to align itself with Forman: the film seems serious about freedom of speech issues rather than offering a titillating erotic spectacle. Mike Clark gave the film four stars out of four, saying,

"The movie has much more than gynecology on its mind. Like 12 ANGRY MEN, it's a civics lesson that will still be regaling film enthusiasts four decades hence."

Like other reviewers Clark saw the ironies in such a position, calling the film "disingenuously ungraphic in terms of nudity." Indeed, one extremely negative reviewer bitterly lamented that the film lacked *Hustler*'s honesty.

Aside from its points about pornography, to which I shall return, the feminist anti-porn discourse disturbingly implicates itself in a naive notion of realism: that is,

the film is not like real porn. This charge takes two forms: the film's porn isn't as disgusting as real-life porn and the character Larry Flynt isn't as disgusting as the real-life man. The former point is that it's easy to defend pornography if you don't get people upset by showing them what pornography really is. The latter is that you might become sick of pornography if you learn about how disgusting the real Larry Flynt is. Beyond this, a concern with the evils of the "real" Larry Flynt plugs into a broader cultural discourse: unveiling evil lurking behind and within powerful, successful men.

The realism issue rests on an absurd assumption that films can or should be like real life. To argue that porn in *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT* is not like real porn is somewhat like arguing that Westerns' gunfights between attacking Indians and circled wagon trains are not like the way such fights really were conducted. All filmmakers represent everything within a framework related to their purpose. For Forman's purpose, graphic depiction of pornography was irrelevant. Even "dirty" imagery would not show porn as it really is. It's the notion of porn as a threat to civilized society, not the "reality" of porn that anti-porn activists dread. Porn isn't really what religious conservatives or anti-porn feminists think it is any more than it is really what Milos Forman thinks it is. All these and other positions are caught up in discourses about reality, not simple presentations of it.

And the same holds true for the man Larry Flynt. To continue the Western analogy, we learn nothing useful or surprising about a Western by pointing out how different the real Jesse James was from his fictional representation in a film. No film can ever give us the "real" Jesse James. As William Luhr has shown, John Ford implicitly understood this when he represented Wyatt Earp, a man he knew personally, as a hero in *MY DARLING CLEMENTINE* and as a degenerate in *CHEYENNE AUTUMN*. Could a film depict Larry Flynt as an unredeemable degenerate rather than as a First Amendment hero? Of course. Would this give us the "real" Larry Flynt? Of course not. Biographical films must use characters based upon actual people for their own purposes; they cannot do otherwise. When a director like Frank Perry makes a film like *DOC*, his representation of legendary Western heroes like Doc Holiday and Wyatt Earp is no closer to reality than earlier Westerns. However, Perry employs these figures within a discourse which seeks to destroy rather than build myth.

One of the added dangers of the anti-porn response to *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT* is that it does not realize this. A film showing a "disgusting" Larry Flynt would be no more real than Forman's. A naive view of porn is now overlaid with a naive view of how one should represent "real" people in fiction films. Much in the way that anti-porn pronouncements rarely bother to analyze, historicize or in any way understand pornography as culturally complex and even contradictory, critics such as Gloria Steinam who reject *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT* do not bother to question commonplace assumptions about the "real" Larry Flynt and his relation to the fictional character. Just as they know that porn is one-dimensionally evil and produces terrible social problems for women, they know how simple the truth about Larry Flynt is and how easily it could be put into a movie.

Such a facile "realist" aesthetic is revealing about porn. Our culture is currently obsessed with revealing the ugly truth about "important men", be they artists or politicians. The year that gave us Larry Flynt also gave us Pablo Picasso. The film

SURVIVING PICASSO touched off a media feeding-frenzy about how terribly Picasso treated women, and this in turn touched off agonizing over the fact that great artists are sometimes terrible men. This did not, however, touch off agonizing over whether Picasso was a great artist (incidentally, not everyone agrees that he was). Forget for the moment my point that the Picasso of this film is just as much a construct as a more conventional account of a great artist (e.g. Kirk Douglas as Vincent Van Gogh in LUST FOR LIFE). Now he is constructed within a cultural discourse which revels in tearing the mask off cultural heroes, revealing the depraved "real" man beneath the myth.

Similarly, Vincent Canby tells us that

"Rainer Werner Fassbinder, though 'prodigiously talented,' was no saint; Fassbinder, who died in 1982 at the age of 36, was not a nice man; he was seductive, ruthless, brilliant and, though surrounded by people, always alone. He could shower friends and associates with expensive presents one minute and ignore them the next, sometimes for years. Treated even worse were the male lovers, two of whom committed suicide; the women tended to make humiliating compromises to remain in his circle. He was a master of power games" ("Honoring Fassbinder").

In short, it sounds to me that Canby finds Fassbinder the man as appealing as Steinem finds Flynt. However, his article is entitled, "Honoring Fassbinder the Director, Not the Man." As with Picasso, in the name of art the artist's evils are put aside. We may have a cultural need at the moment to insist on the sordid "realities" of the lives of great artists but also need to assert that that such knowledge changes nothing about the work. Indeed, we are proud of being able simultaneously to deplore these men and recognize their accomplishments.

Imagine for the moment a headline, "Honor Flynt the Publisher, Not the Man." Not likely. Our culture always insists on pornography being a special case. Let's say for the sake of argument that Larry Flynt was not a nice father; in fact, let's say he was a monstrous father. Within a social climate of reveling in such disclosures, why should we single out Flynt's transgressions in comparison to, say, Fassbinder's? Why believe that there is a special horror to Flynt's personal life which should be insisted on in stark contrast to the manner in which Vincent Canby, for example, virtually accuses Fassbinder of being responsible for two suicides but insists that we separate Fassbinder the man from his films?

The answer is that the anti-pornography position finds pornography different from everything else; the usual rules don't apply. It is somehow self-evident that a pornographer who is "not a nice man" (maybe self-evident that a pornographer couldn't be a nice man) is different from an artist who is not a nice man. The allegedly self-evident evil of pornography and pornographers blocks anti-porn activists from offering any useful insights into their much-dreaded subject. Milos Forman's solution is to avoid the subject in the name of a higher good. Oddly enough, porn falls through the cracks in both the film and the anti-porn discourse surrounding it.

Imagine if the director of THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT had been someone who announced that he liked porn and found it useful. Obviously, THE PEOPLE VS.

LARRY FLYNT would have been a much different movie. I do not want to criticize Forman for making this film rather than another. For the record, I find THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT an uneven and minor film: it ranges from humorous to heavy-handed to unexpectedly emotional moments. In our culture, predictably the most I can imagine for a Hollywood film on this topic is a filmmaker like Forman, who has other things on his mind than porn. Regardless of where one stands on the issue, porn seems a simple, self-evident topic: ban it or put up with it in the name of a higher good.

But what if porn has value like any other genre? What if, as Linda Williams does in her excellent book, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and "The Frenzy of the Visible"*, we think about porn as having a changing history of style and function? What if, instead of just deploring, labeling, banning and burning porn, we try to understand and evaluate it as, for example, we try to understand and evaluate Westerns? John Ford, generally acknowledged as the greatest director of Westerns, seems to not have been a particularly nice man — in how he treated his family or himself. Yet, we manage to stay calm about that. What if we treated pornographers and pornography as similar to other artists and forms of expression?

Ironically, such a context would enable a much more meaningful criticism of Flynt's particular form of pornography, including his racism and misogyny — providing, of course, that that is an accurate reading of *Hustler*. One of Williams's valuable insights is that 70s hardcore porn features are much more complex and contradictory in this regard than they are typically characterized. In other words, instead of condemning porn or taking the First Amendment high road, one could within the framework I have proposed substantively criticize Flynt and *Hustler*. But that presumes one grants that pornography warrants that kind of attention, precisely what its critics and Forman have not done.

Yet THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT does relate to one interesting issue within pornography, the subject of humor and taste. Pornography is funny, at times very funny. When a judge in New York ruled DEEP THROAT pornographic, the World, an adult theater in midtown Manhattan, ran a marquee that read, "Judge cuts Throat, World mourns." Porn titles alone reveal that the porn world has an ever-present sense of humor. Which finally brings us back to Forman's point about taste. Porn humor is tasteless, something in which it frequently revels. The makers of the film ON GOLDEN BLONDE could revel in punning the title of the Fonda film ON GOLDEN POND and could also revel in distressing Jane Fonda or Henry Fonda in a way that neither the actors nor anyone else could do anything about.

I entitled this paper with a pornographer's sense of humor: "Will the Real Larry Flynt Please Stand Up?" The joke puns on the dispute between anti-porn critics and Forman: Is the real Larry Flynt a despicable degenerate or a First Amendment hero? It also puns on the fact that the real Larry Flynt is paralyzed from the waist down and can't stand up. Everyone would agree that this latter aspect of the pun is "tasteless" because it makes fun of a paralyzed man. It is precisely this kind of calculated tasteless humor in which Flynt and pornography in general engage. The question is, can it serve a useful function? As I have argued elsewhere, with so many aspects of porn the answer is surprisingly complex.

Shortly after Ted Kennedy's Chappaquiddick accident made front-page news, *Screw*, a porn magazine, ran the much-publicized picture of Robert Kennedy as he

lay dying. The caption presents Kennedy's dying words as, "Tell Ted that Mary Jo gives good head." I long remembered that joke because it struck me as the most tasteless, offensive joke imaginable. Like many young people then, I was committed to the Kennedys' brand of liberal politics; the ruin of those politics by assassination, alleged drunken driving, and negligent behavior did not seem suitable for grotesque sexual humor.

Yet, as the years have passed, that joke has come to mean something much different to me than it did at the time of its publication, when the mainstream "tasteful" press did not report what it knew about politicians' sex lives. In what has since been commonly referred to as a "boy's club" mentality, the press has been roundly scolded for protecting powerful men like the Kennedys. When the public demanded full coverage of every politician's sex life, much evidence emerged that John, Robert and Ted Kennedy all engaged in many extramarital affairs. Perhaps the most famous of these are the alleged affairs that both John and Robert Kennedy had with Marilyn Monroe. Most recent was the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, which once again involved Ted Kennedy who had been with Smith the night of the alleged rape. With changes in journalistic practices that led to, among other things, Gary Hart's resignation as a Democratic presidential candidate in 1988, it's now generally acknowledged that the press used to cover up such news.

Within this context, the "tasteless" *Screw* joke serves an interesting function of breaking with the legitimate press' "tasteful" old boys network. In effect, it blows the whistle on the Kennedys' sex lives and the fact that legitimate journalism complicity protected politicians' behavior. This, of course, doesn't make the joke less offensive, but it suggests that even when offended by "tasteless" humor, we shouldn't contemptuously dismiss it.

Interestingly, in *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT* Forman does portray Larry Flynt as a man with a tasteless sense of humor and perhaps unwittingly shows that such humor can serve a social function. In one scene, for example, Flynt attends a trial wearing a shirt boldly proclaiming, "Fuck This Court." As the "Judge Cuts Throat, World Mourns" joke indicates, the legal system is often a target of porn humor.

My point here is not to defend either Larry Flynt or *Hustler* magazine. I know virtually nothing about either. In contrast to Milos Forman, I am not proud of that nor of the fact that I have yet to buy a copy of *Hustler*. Although *Hustler* has never appealed to me, some pornography does, and I have purchased some of it. I also would not berate Forman for making a movie different from the one I wish had been made. Forman legitimately uses Flynt and *Hustler* as First Amendment material. His eliding any examination of pornography from the film, however, combined with his comments to the press about his lack of interest in, knowledge of and use for pornography ironically treats pornography in the same manner as his severest critics, anti-porn activists. For both, pornography is a simple given.

Both Forman's strategy and the anti-porn position have a further consequence. The film's treating porn as a special horror deflects attention away from the frequently close relation between porn's treatment of women and mainstream cultural practices, which, in contrast to porn's evils, emerge relatively unscathed. Indeed, it is with the very "tasteful" practices of *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT* and the Hollywood cinematic institution to which it belongs that I wish to conclude this

essay. The film comes down to a choice between two men: Larry Flynt and Jerry Falwell. Given that the film portrays Falwell as a self-righteous, pious buffoon, Flynt emerges all the more heroic by contrast. Instead of worrying about the "real" Larry Flynt, I would argue that we are better served by worrying about how the fictional Larry Flynt is constructed in relation to the fictional Jerry Falwell.

Analyzing Alfred Hitchcock's NOTORIOUS, Michael Renov argues that the film entraps its central female character within what he calls a "two-male system" — the good figure of the Law (Cary Grant) and the bad (Claude Rains). Cary Grant working for the U.S. government versus Claude Rains as an undercover Nazi presents as extreme a contrast as one can imagine in the film's 1946 context. Yet Renov points out that this opposition masks the manner in which Grant brutally and powerfully gains control over the woman that he and Rains fight over. At the end of the film, Grant rescues the Ingrid Bergman character from the evil clutches of Rains. The audience is positioned to cheer her rescue without noticing the frightening nature of the character who engineers the rescue and in the process gains total domination over the nearly unconscious woman. The Grant character, in other words, emerges a good hero in contrast to Rains' evil villain when in reality the former is quite an evil character.

Such two-male systems function as a commonplace in Hollywood cinema. THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT offers an interesting variation on the pattern. The issue at the film's climax is not what happens to a female character but the manner in which the female spectator is positioned between Flynt and Falwell. Since the film represents Falwell as a simple-minded threat to free speech, Flynt, the active crusader for our rights, emerges as hero. In this version of the two-male system, Falwell functions like NOTORIOUS' Rains character and Flynt like the Grant character. Forman uses the First Amendment to rally the audience around Flynt. Given the choice between the film's Flynt and Falwell, viewers choose Flynt. To position not only women but all spectators of the film in such a manner is truly pornographic.

POSTSCRIPT

The press seemingly cannot get enough of the controversy surrounding THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT. Since I formed my analysis, several others have appeared which relate to my argument. In an almost uncanny manner, with a cover boldly asking, "Is Larry Flynt Hustling Hollywood? The Truth & the Lies Behind the Year's Most Controversial Movie," *Entertainment Weekly* notes:

"If this article were a cartoon in an issue of *Hustler*, the punch line would probably be some sick, smart-ass joke along the lines of... Will the real Larry Flynt please stand up? But this magazine isn't nearly so tasteless..." (Svetkey, 22).

Although he does not analyze the function of this kind of humor, Benjamin Svetkey, author of the lead article, perceives its structure and links it to a discourse of taste. That both of us arrived at the same joke from the same perspective indicates how aside from its banality and predictability, the joke does capture a common characteristic of porn humor. Also, Svetkey's article is caught within the polarized discourse that surrounds the film: the kicker accompanying the article's opening photomontage asks, "First amendment activist — or sadistic smut king?"

(Svetkey, 16). Svetkey does not undermine the manner in which posing such an either/or question positions us to accept one pole or the other, or a mix of the two. He fails to see that Flynt is at neither pole nor somewhere in between. Although I reject the polarity, Flynt remarks of himself, "I'd say a little bit of both" (Svetkey, 22).

Svetkey also quotes Gloria Steinem as remarking,

"This is not a different interpretation of a historical figure, like Oliver Stone's NIXON. This is like doing a film about Vietnam in which you say the worst thing about it is that it was tacky, but it really wasn't all that dangerous, and it was actually quite a lot of fun" (22).

Here Steinem anticipates and attempts to defuse the kind of criticism I made above using Jesse James, Wyatt Earp and Westerns as examples. Her strategy remains the same: porn somehow represents a special case. She wants to protect the legitimacy of Oliver Stone's portrait of Nixon while denying that of Forman's Flynt (incidentally Oliver Stone was a producer of THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT.)

She offers little other evidence than the unfortunate hypothetical example about Vietnam. I say unfortunate since films have been made which portray war in a manner close to the way she describes. Blake Edwards' remarkable comedy WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR, DADDY? represents World War II as not so dangerous (for all the combat, we never seen anyone die or get hurt) and as quite fun — rather than fight, the Italians and Americans decide to get together and have a party! Edwards' DARLING LILI treats World War 1 in a similar manner. And both films were made during the Vietnam War, a time when war was a very serious social issue.

In a *New York Review of Books* essay, punningly entitled "It's a Wonderful Life" (i.e., Capra porn instead of Capra corn), Louis Menand perceptively observes:

"On the subject of pornography, THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT seems to have nothing more to say than that it's a harmless amusement that some people have a taste for and some people don't, and that people who try to suppress it are a good deal more dangerous than people who produce it"(26).

Menand, however, supplies an intelligent reading of the real Flynt's relationship to Falwell and *Hustler's* actual relation to *Playboy*. He incisively remarks,

"*Playboy* would have interviewed Jerry Falwell; *Hustler* stuck him in an obscene parody. It's important to see that 'fancy' aperitifs were being sneered at right along with Falwell" (27).

Menand recognizes three important elements left out of most media coverage of the film and the controversy surrounding it. Most important, he perceives a function for *Hustler's* sense of humor, namely making fun of the famous, successful and powerful figures whom *Playboy* honored monthly with serious interviews. Rather than emulate the wealthy lifestyle advocated by *Playboy*, *Hustler* lampooned it and part of that included mocking the intellectual respectability for which *Playboy* strove. Menand's reference to the fact that Flynt

and Falwell both would sneer at aperitifs points to his second important insight: namely that Falwell and Flynt are opposite sides of the same coin. Both appealed to the same socio-economic stratum — the low-income working class.

Finally, Menand recognizes the historical context in which different kinds of pornography arise and the different functions porn fulfills within those contexts. Originating in 1953, Menand argues that *Playboy* was part of a liberated spirit of the time which required treating women with seeming respect; although they were naked, they were pure, chaste and free of guilt. *Hustler*, originating in 1974, came during the height of the free love movement with its rhetoric of eliminating the double standard. This was also after the rise of hardcore porn films. In Menand's analysis, *Hustler* reacted against both the elimination of the double standard and hardcore's emphasis on the legitimacy of female pleasure. (Although he doesn't cite her, Linda Williams had years earlier made the observation about women's pleasure in early 70s porn.) *Hustler* was about shame and violation in sex — a throwback to the era prior to *Playboy*. Menand summarizes the resultant paradox:

"The profile of Falwell's audience, in other words, apart from the obvious difference, was remarkably similar to the profile of *Hustler's* audience" (28).

Although Menand accepts an uncritical, fuzzy notion about the obligation of films based on "real-life" events to capture the "essence of lived experience" (26), he uses the film to analyze the "real" Larry Flynt and *Hustler* magazine in a highly incisive manner. Laura Kipnis also does a superb job of precisely that in a *Village Voice* article also entitled "It's a Wonderful Life." That pun seems as irresistible as "Will the real Larry Flynt please stand up?"

Kipnis analysis appeared prior to the attention that Steinem and other anti-porn activists brought to the film. Like me, Kipnis is not impressed with what she calls the film's "pained liberalism" (37). Kipnis roots her analysis of Flynt and *Hustler* in class issues: "Vulgarity becomes a form of class solidarity" and a "mode for undermining authority" (38). In an illuminating manner, she contrasts *Playboy's* airbrushed, fantasy bodies with *Hustler's* grotesque, unruly bodies. She links the pleasure of the latter with transgressing prohibitions externally imposed by the powers that be and internally imposed by "forms of shame and embarrassment" (39).

In this regard, Menand's and Kipnis' analyses usefully demonstrate how porn — like other forms of art, expression, and entertainment — fulfills specific functions for specific classes of people within specific historical circumstances. We may not always like those functions, but acknowledging them keeps us from dismissively condemning them as lacking social value or meaning. From this perspective, the once-honored legal notion of "socially redeeming value," is itself highly suspect. It is impossible to draw a line between the already merely prurient and that with socially redeeming value because all representations of sexuality function in a meaningful way for someone. Instead of just labeling and dismissing some sexual representations as prurient, obscene, or tasteless (and, incidentally, thereby protecting our "tasteful" versions such as Courtney Love stripping on video as we and the fictional Flynt watch), we'd do well to learn what we can about our culture and its notions of sexuality from all of these forms. Such a posture would also make us all, including anti-porn activists, examine our notions of sexuality in a

potentially revealing manner. Many of the anti-porn position's assumptions about sexuality are as dubious as those made by Larry Flynt, though by reason of class, education, taste and social positioning, their assumptions are much less likely to offend certain people than Flynt's.

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Appearing live on your campus! Porn-education roadshows

by Eithne Johnson

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In April 1995, MIT graduate students organized a public panel discussion in reaction to a private strip show that had been sponsored by male students in a dormitory. Offended by the idea of this strip show, the graduate students ambitiously wanted their panel to address the issues that they felt it raised: "prostitution, stripping, and pornography." Following advice from friends, faculty, and on-line respondents, the panel organizers decided to provide a "balanced" panel by setting up "pro" and "con" sides. Thus, they imposed this binary opposition on the speakers who (warily) agreed to participate. "Pro" panelists included Kim Airs, "sacred sex worker" and sex shop owner; Cynthia Chandler, a Harvard Law School student who was under consideration for Playboy's "Ivy League" issue; and me, a media studies instructor and researcher on women's porn. "Con" panelists included Northeastern University professor Jackson Katz, founder of the "anti-sexist" group "Real Men"; attorney Sally Hunt, who defends street prostitutes; and sociology professor Gail Dines, "renown lecturer on the pervasiveness of the media in our MTV culture" (program). For the organizers, this panel was a feminist political response to the pressing problem of sexism on campus, epitomized for them by the strip show.

For me, the panel was cause to reflect on the many porn-related panels that I have organized, participated in, and/or attended over several years. Given that I had once been a student activist, I could relate to the students' desire for an immediate and feminist-identified response. However, I was dismayed that the anti-pornography argument, to which they devoted the lion's share of the evening, had already shaped their understanding of feminist media criticism.[1][[open notes in a new window](#)] Following on thirty years of women's activism, feminist media presentations, such as the anti-porn slide show, deserve more critical attention precisely as spectacles that use media for polemical education and advertising critique (most notably, Jean Kilbourne's influential "Killing Us Softly" series).

Since the early-to-mid eighties when X-rated movie screenings became the target of campus protests, a marginal space has emerged for feminist speakers who "educate" college audiences about the perils or pleasures of pornography, which may be defined so broadly as to include advertising and slasher films.[2] As you probably know, these feminist educators typically use slide shows or video clips as

their main attractions. That these spectacles purport to instruct even as they promise to titillate and/or terrify their audiences suggests a strategy similar to the exhibition practices of "classical" exploitation roadshows.[3] According to Eric Schaefer, because the "classical" exploitation film existed in a "space between" reputable cinema and disreputable (stag) films, producers were motivated to claim an educational value for their lurid pictures (127). Like the "classical" exploitation exhibitor, these feminist speakers offer hybrid pornographic/ educational roadshow attractions. As itinerant performers, they exploit the "space between" the official curriculum and extracurricular activities, which not so long ago could include porn movie screenings.

Here I will consider two prominent figures on the feminist roadshow circuit who exemplify the two types of spectacles — "anti-porn" and "pro-sex." Wheelock College professor Gail Dines is opposed vehemently not only to pornography but also to much of popular culture because both perpetuate "images of violence against women" (publicity). Writer/editor Susie Bright is a pro-sex feminist who encourages women to explore pornography for its range of sex fantasies and to contribute to the genre.

In this essay, I will look at the ways in which these pornographic-educational roadshows reconstruct pornography as a reading practice while also creating marginal venues for discussions of sexual agency and sexual abuse. Two discursive tactics are deployed: 1) the anti-porn roadshow defines pornography as patriarchal propaganda for violence against women, illustrated by images from porn, advertising, and horror movies; 2) the pro-sex roadshow defines pornography as a genre in order to show its mutability as a cultural form and its accessibility to women as producers and consumers. Both moves reconstruct pornography through interpretive readings that depend on the appropriation of pre-existing images. Formally, they recall the "compilation" type of the "classical" exploitation film. Thus, the anti-porn slide show compiles images that read pornography as the "objectification" of women: the educator (Dines) locates female victims upon whose symbolically posed bodies will be found traces of a now-absent male perpetrator. The pro-sex video show compiles scenes that read pornography as the representational territory for sexual fantasies: the educator (Bright) celebrates pornographic scenes that exemplify female sexual agency and erotic pleasure. It is important to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages imposed by using "pornographic" images as *both* the catalyst *for* and the organizing principle of feminist educational events. What does it mean that these pornographic/ educational roadshows have appeared in reaction to popular entertainments (X-rated movies, strip shows) that promise pornographic spectacle? How do they teach women to read pornography and what are the implications of such education? To address these questions, I will show how pornographic/educational roadshows function as attractions.

BALLYHOO AND SELF-PROMOTION

Hoping to lure straight men for instant consciousness-raising, the MIT organizers promoted their panel to appeal to implied male consumers: "A Buyer's Guide to Prostitution, Stripping, and Pornography." On the promotional flyer, the catchphrases "LIVE GIRLS" and "Equality of the Sexes" appeared in light and dark print respectively, promising both pornographic entertainment and educational

debate. While exploiting pornography's generic imperative to reveal live flesh, the organizers sought to persuade attendees to take an "educated" position according to the "pro" and "con" factions seemingly represented by us, the panelists. This balancing act made the evening tense for us since we were precisely set up to become spectacular. For the audience, it delivered the ultimate battle between pornographic/ educational roadshows, pitting pro-sexers against anti-pornographers. The audience did not know that the terms of the engagement had been rigged from the start, as I will explain. However, as such campus spectacles go, the unannounced strip act by "sacred sex worker" Kim Airs was probably the exception rather than the rule. This was clearly more LIVE GIRL than the organizers expected to see, even as they had unabashedly promoted the event with such ballyhoo.

Gail Dines and Susie Bright also negotiate the distinction between the "serious" educator and the entertaining LIVE GIRL according to their discursive tactics. Both cultivate visibility within the public sphere, are represented by agents, and have appeared on talk television. For Professor Dines, the anti-porn discourse opens up a channel for official institutional support. For example, she was scheduled at Emerson College in April, 1995, under the auspices of the Dean of Students Office and the Committee for Awareness Programs at Emerson. "Seriously" entitled, "Sexy or Sexist? Violence Against Women in the Media," her presentation was accompanied by publicity from her agency calling it, "A Powerful Slide/Lecture Presentation by Gail Dines, Ph.D." Here, a photo of Dines, posed austere in professional attire, appeared bottom-right, visually counterbalancing a sexy fashion photo upper-left. Even as this semiotic display exploited the education/entertainment divide, Dines' credentials served to situate her roadshow as seriously instructional:

"Drawing upon research by sociologists, psychologists, feminists and media scholars, Dines will examine how these images affect the way we think about ourselves as males and females, as sexual beings and as potential victims and victimizers."

Suggestively linking sex and violence, this anti-porn discourse proposes to preempt any pleasure associated with explicit imagery by framing heterosexuality in terms of the "objectification" theory: female = object/ victim; male = subject/ victimizer. The disciplinary educator promises to reveal the latent meaning of pornographic imagery through the re-representation of the LIVE GIRL as victim. It comes as no surprise, then, that Dines not only supported local protests against an adult video store in Boston (as did fellow panelist Jackson Katz), but she also brought Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon to testify for their controversial anti-porn ordinance before the Massachusetts legislature.

Because the anti-porn roadshow created a space for "serious" feminist educators, it has dominated the scene from the college campus to Capitol Hill. At the same time, it has engendered resistance to its polemical "objectification" thesis. Bright's pornographic-educational roadshow emerged out of the feminist pro-sex and anti-censorship movements, with which she identifies, given her history as sex toy specialist at Good Vibrations, a film reviewer for *Penthouse Forum*, and the first editor of *On Our Backs*, which dared to play off the more "serious" feminist publication, *off our backs*. Like other women porn producers, Bright seeks to

subvert the prevailing anti-porn argument by countering it as an informed consumer/connoisseur. In this way, she implicitly claims to be subjectified, not objectified through pornography. Not only does Bright reject the distinction between "good" erotica and "bad" pornography supported by anti-porn feminists, but she incorporates the generic promise of the LIVE GIRL into her own performances and her promotional materials.

In 1987, Bright hit the college circuit, beginning with Cal Arts; she was also welcomed at gay/lesbian film festivals. Her first roadshow was titled "How to Read a Dirty Movie," featuring a video compilation. She followed with another video compilation roadshow, "All Girl Action, The History of Lesbian Eroticism in Hollywood." Her roadshows tend to be supported by gay-lesbian-bisexual groups either on campuses or outside official institutions. In Austin in 1990, "How to Read a Dirty Movie" was part of the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, while "All Girl Action" was "sponsored by the Women's Media Project" (Maher). At Williams College in 1995, Bright's "Sexual State of the Union Address" was sponsored by the Dively Committee, the BGLU, the Lecture Committee, and the Theatre Department. As a self-appointed, bisexual-lesbian spokeswoman for the LIVE GIRL, Bright occupies a more marginal position on the campus roadshow circuit than Dines, whose institutional affiliation secures her status as a legitimate educator. As a "sexy" performer, Bright seeks to challenge the limits of women's respectable behavior in public; for Dines, institutional codes set limits on dress and behavior that can affect career opportunities.

SHOW-WOMANSHIP

A pornographic/educational roadshow succeeds as an attraction to the degree that the educator fulfills the ballyhoo's promise to deliver a spectacular performance. True to her "serious" publicity photo, Dines performs as a Marxist-feminist vanguardist. Dines' agency markets her roadshow as a humane mission; statistics on the incidence of rape, battery, and molestation of females (whether or not accurate) are meant to shock. As an agit-prop performer intent on persuasion, Dines has sought to control the impact of her presentation before it even begins. On the eve of the MIT event, organizers admitted they had allotted Dines more time for her slide show than the entire "pro" side combined. The students justified the disparity by saying that Dines would not participate unless they gave her a minimum of 20 minutes, which was all she would agree to edit her 45 minute show down to. She has purportedly set rigid terms at other events as well.

According to Jim D'Entremont and Bob Chatelle of the Boston Coalition for Freedom of Expression, they invited Dines to participate in a debate at Boston University regarding the anti-porn ordinance then supported by Dines, Dworkin, and MacKinnon. At the event, Dines refused to debate the other panelist and took questions only from students. After taking up much more than her allotted time, Dines summarily left the panel, followed by a group of supporters. (D'Entremont and Chatelle suspect that the audience was stacked with several of Dines' students from nearby Wheelock College.)

The other panelist, a woman with much experience defending civil liberties and supporting women's shelters, had little time to present her argument against the anti-porn ordinance, much less to contend with an audience that was greatly disturbed by Dines' rhetoric. The rabble-rousing anti-porn performance appears to

demonstrate the triumph of the disciplinary educator over pornography's perversity. Emotionally moved audiences obviously find something gratifying in this victory in rhetoric. By refusing to debate, democratic dialogue is suppressed in favor of moral indignation.

Whereas Dines issues radical-critical theory warnings about popular culture's seductiveness, Bright revels in seduction's consumerist pleasures. In performance mode as "Susie Sexpert," Bright wants to be the "bad" girl to the "good" women of anti-porn feminism. Like porn stars-turned-performance artists, Bright uses her body to deconstruct the theater of pornography, its sexual stylings and fantasy constructions.[4] Her sartorial choices as Susie Sexpert signify her cultivation of perversity: she embodies a connoisseur of pornography, the pleasure-seeking, sexually subjectified consumer which anti-porn feminism has traditionally denied to women and ceded to men.

Unlike Dines, who has an appointment at an academic institution which gives her economic security, Bright has a much less secure occupation as "freelance writer, editor, and lecturer." [5] Dines' roadshow may be motivated by Marxist feminist politics, but she does not have to tour for a living. Bright has financial reasons to stay on the lecture circuit as well as on book tours (sometimes simultaneously). Indeed, Cleis Press markets Bright as a pop culture commodity/ connoisseur: "America's favorite X-rated intellectual" (publicity). Since Bright has to consider the possibility of future gigs, she probably has to give a "good" performance" to be invited back. Criteria for judging her performances would emphasize their entertainment value and inclusiveness of sexual identities; of course, official discourses can also deploy these very criteria to withhold legitimacy to her lectures. Few academic programs would actually hire her as a self-styled "X-rated intellectual," but she has taught the occasional class, including a course, "The Politics of Sexual Representation," at UC Santa Cruz (her alma mater). In contrast, Dines' academic credentials authorize her performances as an educator, seemingly removed from the realm of commodities. As a professor, her words have weight; however, if her presentation were subject to peer review, it might have attracted a lot more critical attention from media scholars by now.

THE "SQUARE UP" OR HOW TO ATTRACT AUDIENCES BY ALARMING THEM

As Eric Schaefer explains in his dissertation, the "classical" exploitation film typically began with a "square up": "a prefatory statement about the social or moral ill the film was attempting to combat" (125). Purporting to provide a somber educational perspective, the "square up" served as a moralistic pretense for showing the lurid spectacle which the film promised its audience. Schaefer points out that roadshow advertising ("exploitation" as it was then called) played up such pictures' edifying and titillating aspects. For films dealing with sexual matters, audiences were even segregated by gender, an exhibition strategy that could be seen to support a conservative take on sexual relations (even if it was only meant to safeguard the box office). Pornographic/ educational media presentations also use the "square up" tactic, especially those that promote an anti-porn argument. Indeed, anti-porn presentations perpetuate an inherently conservative, segregationist model of gender relations by setting up a female victim against a male victimizer. Because this strategy is used by porn opponents on the far right and the radical left, it deserves further scrutiny. In asking people to identify with

the quintessential victim — the young girl — such educational presentations talk down to their audiences in order to scare them into the correct reading.[6]

Before discussing the "square up" for Dines' presentation, it is worth comparing two videos that promote anti-porn positions: Sut Jhally's DREAMWORLDS (1990) and Focus on the Family's LEARN TO DISCERN (1992). Offering a radical critique of gender on MTV, DREAMWORLDS opens as follows: "Warning: This video contains scenes of graphic sexual violence which may disturb some viewers." Then the title appears followed by the subtitle, "Desire/Sex/Power in Rock Video." While the warning sets up the expectation for exposure to "graphic sexual violence," without explaining what constitutes such, the subtitle then suggests erotic excitement.[7] Since both violence and erotica can be emotionally unsettling, the warning primes audiences to become disturbed. The opening sequence explains that MTV was designed to target teens, but the accompanying visual imagery (taken from a music video) implies that the real target is young girls, echoing the anti-porn argument's claim that the true victim of a pornographic culture is the female child.

From a critical Christian perspective, LEARN TO DISCERN opens with a similar warning directed toward parents presumably ignorant of how popular culture puts their children "at risk," especially the innocent girl. Not surprisingly, heavy metal iconography figures prominently in both DREAMWORLDS (as sexist imagery) and LEARN TO DISCERN (as satanist imagery). Though from opposite ends of the political spectrum with regard to gender relations and capitalism, both videos incorporate the feminist anti-porn strategy of linking "pornographic" images (from porn, MTV, advertising, and slasher films) with violence against women. Seeking to impose fear, DREAMWORLDS exploits the theme music from HALLOWEEN; LEARN TO DISCERN is shot with a studio audience, so reaction shots of disturbed faces bolster the educator's lecture.

This "horror show" approach has proven very effective attracting and provoking audiences, from students to senators.[8] As an exhibition practice, the "square up" helps position the educator as expert (on media, on female victimization), and therefore most competent to read popular imagery. To prepare people to see Gail Dines' presentation at Emerson College, the Director of Student Activities issued the following memo:

"Please be advised that the slide presentation will contain adult content and that children under 18 are discouraged from attending."

(What better way to prime an audience of college students than to warn them of "adult content?") Attached to the memo, Dines' publicity flyer provided a provocative warning that was posted all over campus:

"On a daily basis we are bombarded with media images that suggest sexual harassment is flirting, battery is foreplay, and rape is hot sex. Using examples from advertisements, films, magazines, MTV, and 'slasher' movies, Gail Dines shows how images of violence against women are so commonplace that we, as a society, are becoming desensitized to them."

Dines' "square up" sets up an expectation to be "desensitized," presumably by

viewing an atrocity exhibit of "violence against women." While Dines repudiates these images as dangerous to women, her slide show exhibition compels her to inflict those same images on her largely female audiences. Given that Hitchcock's notorious quote — "Torture the women! The trouble today is we don't torture the women enough" — appears at the top of her publicity flyer, she seems to have learned something important from this Hollywood showman. Hitchcock, DePalma, slasher films, and made-for-TV movies have exploited audience sympathy for female characters-as-victims. Similarly, Dines wants to generate and exploit such sympathy in order to win adherents to anti-porn feminism. Even as the anti-porn educator urges women to become "image-literate" (so they are aware of this "violence"), anti-porn discourse preempts individual women's competency to read popular imagery by presenting only one correct, disciplined reading. If any woman finds the imagery erotic, then she is left to conclude that such pleasures must be guilty.

Because Susie Bright seeks to challenge anti-porn discourse, she uses the "square up" tactic in seeming parody. Her first roadshow, titled "How to Read a Dirty Movie," echoes the anti-porn educator's assumption that audiences need to be taught a proper way to read porn. Thus, Bright's "square up" beckons an audience already sensitized to anti-porn discourse. As Bright explained to reviewer Kathleen Maher,

"It's very much like an erotic literacy tour...A lot of it is about gender and then I talk about what people mean when they talk about violence in pornography" (21).

Like Dines, Bright claims the educated reader's position, but from personal experience rather than formal education. To counter the anti-porn presumption that (good feminist) women are porn-illiterates, pro-sex discourse issues from a s/expert — a feminist whose consumer/producer experience with the genre qualifies her to explain it. For her sexpertise, Bright draws on her impressive background as reviewer, performer, and consultant for sexually explicit films.

Whereas Dines' "square up" warns audiences about harmful violent images, Bright subverts the tactic by warning audiences of the dangers of a feminist discourse that fails to acknowledge women's pleasures in and production of sexually explicit imagery. In fact, Bright wants to champion porn — especially its non-normative "girl-girl" convention — and selected film imagery as sites in which lesbians could locate and read female sexual desire in a society that has refused direct representation of lesbian sexuality. With "All Girl Action, The History of Lesbian Eroticism in Hollywood," Bright promises to reveal the pleasures of "deviant" readings.[9] Unlike Dines' show, which attempts to close down alternative readings, Bright's show opens up space for multiple readings and interpretive competencies. Moreover, she does not talk down to her audiences nor ask them to assume a universalized position of the innocent young girl.

THE MEDIUM IS THE DISMEMBERMENT

According to Dines' publicity,

"By carefully analyzing and dissecting the images, Dines helps to promote image literacy by making the viewers aware of the ways in

which the media manipulates and seduces its audience."

How she uses her chosen medium — the slide show — is key to this method of "dissection" analysis. Indeed, the anti-porn slide show formally constructs the objectifying dismemberment which it claims pornography does: it gives a serial display of anonymous female body parts cut out of any meaningful context. In an essay written in 1981, Paula Webster describes a feminist anti-porn slide show that included:

"about 30 images of predominantly heterosexual couples engaged in intercourse...There were shots of individual women, bound and gagged, pictures of female dominatrices, assorted album covers, posters, clothing advertisements, as well as a handful of very jarring images of self-mutilation and the now-infamous *Hustler* photos of women arranged as food on a platter or put through a meat grinder." (48)

That description from 1981 could easily apply to Dines' current slide show.[10] This strategy of reconstructing pornography as images without specific histories suggests that porn is a static cultural form. To support the objectification theory of violent imagery and its detrimental effects on women, anti-porn feminists have to mount evidence that popular culture is dangerous and even resistant to change. Indeed, Dines exhorted the MIT audience to "stop analyzing" pornography and start building an "old-fashioned organization" to fight it.

Following Dines' presentation, MIT professor Henry Jenkins noted a contradiction: she criticized "textual analysis" yet used it to read meaning from the slides. Dines said her method of textual analysis — in contrast to what she identified as polysemic postmodern approaches — was accurate for understanding "overall context" as well as how texts are constructed. Dines warned,

"Ultimately there's nothing you can play with to get this woman out of this position [referring to an explicit slide image]."

In a literal sense, she is absolutely right: no matter how one "plays with" an image, one is powerless to alter the context through which the image was produced. But this point only makes sense if one accepts her disprovable assumption about production context — that the woman was forced (more so than any other laborer) into a pose she did not consent to perform. The only "proof" usually offered in support of this assumption is Linda Marchiano's poignant testimony from her autobiography, *Ordeal*, in which she reveals that, as "Linda Lovelace," she was beaten and manipulated by her former husband/manager. By invoking Marchiano's painful past as a porn celebrity (DEEP THROAT), Dines and others insinuate that her experience represents that of women in porn and sex work. Much less can be said of actresses in slasher films and models who pose for advertisements, which regularly focus on specific body parts (eyes, hands, legs, etc.). Because they "objectify" by showing female body parts, Dines reconstructs slasher and ad images as "pornographic." She concludes such images symbolically dismember the female body. These images are then considered a warning to women that their actual bodies may be treated as objects by men, who implicitly read the media as patriarchal propaganda in support of their objectification of women.

In 1981, Paula Webster noted this flaw in the anti-porn logic:

"The most important misunderstanding was that a mere representation was spoken of as a reality — as an actual event recorded by some Candid Camera" (48).

In Dines' anti-porn roadshow, still images seemingly give documentary evidence of male violence against women. Women in the audience are asked to imagine being in the position of the women displayed, reading images as a record of spontaneous domination instead of staged performances. The anti-porn slide show works — inasmuch as one believes in it — precisely because it performs the symbolic dismembering of female bodies. This dismembering is produced specifically through reconstructing pornography as a serial display of static slide images (using gory, glossy body-part imagery). The serially projected images function much like the editing in *PSYCHO*'s shower scene — accumulated shock cuts convey the impression that a stabbing might have occurred.[11] As this serial slide display reconstructs "pornography," the educator's narrative supplies interpretive competence-horror and outrage are the appropriate reactions for reading pornography. This propaganda's sheer disciplinary force makes it unlikely that audience members will risk appearing incompetent in order to point out the obvious: the pornography reconstructed by the educator exists only through this interpretive approach.

DO-IT-YOURSELF PORN

Bright has popularized pro-sex roadshows which reconstruct pornography as a "do-it-yourself" project: anyone can become a porn connoisseur. Subverting the anti-pornographer's insistence on a monolithic reading, Bright's *Sexpert* reconstructs pornography through videotaped compilations. Although these tapes might seem to indicate only her own preferences, as a lesbian-identified bisexual Bright also understands how lesbians may collectively interpret a variety of images as scenes of sapphic desire. For her video compilations, Bright not only picks "girl-girl" porn scenes but also selects from films that have erotic significance for lesbians — *QUEEN CHRISTINA* (1933) and *MOROCCO* (1930) for drag performances, and girl-centered movies, such as *MAEDCHEN IN UNIFORM* (1958) and *THE CHILDREN'S HOUR* (1962). She shows how home-video allows anyone who can afford two VCRs to construct her own pornographic movies. Indeed, "All Girl Action" builds on separate scenes' homoerotic charge by sequencing them to prolong the viewing experience, intensifying the charge since such scenes are otherwise defused within heterosexual narratives.[12] According to Bright, "All Girl Action" represents "sort of a triumphal tour" (Maher, 21). Audiences respond with pleasure to shared lesbian-bisexual readings.

Bright argues that people have learned more about sex from porn than other sources, and that lesbians in particular have learned about sex with women from pornographic conventions. According to Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs, the mass marketplace is "impersonal," "democratic," and "nonjudgmental":

"As a setting for learning about sex, the marketplace offers some clear advantages over friends, medical experts, or even more liberated manuals" (108).

As porn film production shifted to video in the early 80s, it became more readily

available, especially to women, in many video stores instead of remaining marginalized and stigmatized in adults-only enterprises. Nevertheless, porn's status as marginally legal affects what the market can offer. From Bright's perspective, the problem is summarized in a video guide for Good Vibrations (the sex specialty store designed for women):

"There are millions of sex films available to erotically minded video viewers. Most of them are guided by formulas imposed by nothing less than censorship, legal restrictions, limited budgets, and a very narrow view of the intended market for explicit sexual cinema." (1)

Since formulas are influenced by market pressure and innovation, Bright advocates that women not only become better consumers but also producers of porn. She has been especially involved in making porn from a "clit's point of view" (*Herotica*, 3). From 1984-1991 at *On Our Backs*, she was the "Toys for Us" columnist, in which she championed all kinds of sex products and activities, such as dildoes and penetration, which at the time challenged the prevailing lesbian-identified conception of female sexuality. Incorporating her essays from that magazine, Bright has written four books. Since the late eighties, she has edited the *Herotica* collections and contributed to women's erotic books. These and her own books have been issued by alternative feminist publishers, including Cleis Press (gay-oriented) and Down There Press (sex-oriented), as well as by a mass-market publisher, Simon and Schuster. But Bright's enthusiasm for "pornotopia" underplays established porn video companies' and distributors' enormous resistance to change; their audience is internally identified as "raincoaters" (a derogatory male-identified term that they have embraced to flout porn opponents).

THE THRILL-SEEKERS

Building to a rhetorical climax, Dines invokes porn's presumed violence by asking women in the audience if they'd planned to grow up to become "masturbation stimulators" for men (the evil raincoaters). Because competency to read pornographic imagery as violently objectifying is linked to the anti-porn educator's expert reconstruction, she establishes a context for her slide show structurally hostile to alternative readings. Having enticed audiences by warning about the dire effects of desensitization to media imagery, the anti-porn roadshow must satisfy the expectation to be resensitized, shocked and horrified. To borrow from Linda Williams, the anti-porn roadshow must deliver as a "body genre." Fear is the predictable reaction as rhetoric and context invite audiences to "mimic" the appropriate response to sadomasochistic narratives of (female) victimization. Insidiously, Dines invites women to imagine themselves as unwitting victims for men's sexual fantasies. As feminist propaganda, the anti-porn roadshow specifically hails women as "potential victims," objects for both symbolic and literal rape (Dines' publicity).

Beginning with the rhetorical "square up," the anti-porn educator's impulse to locate female victims can be so powerful that women present at the roadshow may confess to experiencing victimization. At the MIT event, panelist Cindy Chandler offered her own testimony of sexual abuse, following Dines' sarcastic attacks aimed at Chandler's desire to appear in *Playboy*. Under such pressure, Chandler inadvertently supported Dines' assumption — that sex workers are always-already victims of abuse — in order to (re)claim her own authority to speak for her ability

to distinguish between coerced and chosen sex acts.[13] By reconstructing pornography as violence against women, the anti-porn slide show appropriates the "sodomasochistic" scenario of the "teen horror film," in which sexually active females are punished by marauding males (Williams). Thus, Dines hopes that both virtuous women and masturbatory males will be scared away from porn.

While Dines sacrifices female sexual agency to the anti-porn cause, Bright explicitly addresses and encourages it. Promising "dirty" movies and "all girl action," Bright's roadshow audiences expect entertaining, diverse, and novel spectacles which women may find exciting. Her videotape compilations include many sex acts, including female ejaculation through masturbation. If Dines' audiences leave terrified, Bright hopes her audiences come and come again. Her enthusiasm stems from interrelated motives: 1) a porn producer's (self-serving) purpose to encourage women to buy porn; and 2) a feminist's consciousness-raising effort to empower women as sexual agents. Bright seeks to relieve viewers' boredom with, or resistance to, porn formulas by emphasizing the hot moments, as if the "on time!" temporality of seduction could be endlessly sustained (Williams, 9). Bright wants to leave her audiences begging for more. Through reconstructing pornography by appropriating a variety of images, from Hollywood to "how-to" productions, Bright encourages the viewer to develop her own expertise, which may multiply her potential pleasures as a sexual subject. Moreover, she suggests that women use porn as men are presumed to use it — for masturbation. Thus, Bright's "user-friendly" conception of pornography suggests that the "pornotopia" has arrived, thanks to home video.

THE (IM)MORAL OF THE STORY

Although the MIT students' believed their ballyhoo would appeal to the campus majority (heterosexual males), the panel attracted a diverse audience—students and humanities faculty, a gay student/sex worker, and community "free speech" activists. Given the way the pornographic/ educational roadshow exploits the "space between" the academy's objective to teach and pornography's promise to titillate, it is not surprising that the event would attract people who already feel marginalized on campus, regardless of the fact that some disagree bitterly over the meaning of pornography. On one level, the event failed the organizers' intended mission — to educate and punish (straight) men, especially the ones who had sponsored the strip show. The anti-porn presentations failed to attack directly the (always absent) male conspirators who presumably produce the images of violence against women. In a moralistic move, the anti-porn educators saw women as incompetent to read porn unless seduced into a masculinized reading position.[14] On another level, the event did provide an enemy since feminist anger was displaced onto the women speakers — and their presumed allies in pornography, prostitution, and stripping — who refused to see porn strictly as the "theory" of violence against women.

Having had my allegiance to feminism thrown into question by Dines, I was further dismayed to see several young women surround her during the reception. Nevertheless, I had to admit that as an undergraduate I, too, once found that argument passionately convincing. Where there was no space on campus (outside women's studies courses) for specifically feminist discussions of either sex or sexual violence, feminists have created one by protesting pornographic movies, in

retrospect an easy target for public disapproval. Having displaced porn movies as sexist entertainment, the anti-pornographic/ educational roadshow provides a feminist space where women can become allies (regardless of their differences), where victims of abusive men can be hailed as "survivors," where consciousness raising can extend to men who support the cause. Drawing on the techniques of the horror/slasher genre, the anti-porn roadshow urges every woman to take a lesson from the Final Girl, who is fierce and chaste.[15] As a result, in its eagerness to stigmatize explicit entertainments, the anti-porn roadshow fails to address sexual pleasure and its diverse expressions. While deemed appropriate, erotica can never be shown because distinguishing between objectionable porn and acceptable erotica would not only collapse the binary opposition that sustains the anti-porn atrocity exhibit, but also subvert the educator's claim to superior knowledge.

While the anti-porn educator exploits pornography's popularity (without admitting that the slide show itself may titillate), the pro-sex educator seeks to address the genre's appeal. Much as X-rated movie screenings may have signified liberation from adult supervision, pornographic-educational roadshows (regardless of orientation) may attract students precisely because students are intrigued by the prospect of exposure to topics previously forbidden to them by adults or banned from the campus by administrators. While promising a pornographic spectacle, feminist roadshows offer informal sex education for college students who face concerns specific to their sexual identities and practices. Obviously, the moral implications of the anti-porn and pro-sex roadshows differ markedly. The former frames heterosexuality as a violent experience leading to female victimization/objectification; the latter frames sexuality as simply a matter of personal agency. In either case, this form of sex education remains an extracurricular affair since sexual knowledges accrue informally on campuses.

Some might argue that both porn and sex education should remain outside the college curriculum since organized efforts to educate about sexuality may suppress diversity and threaten to reinstate the academy's parietal role. According to Andrew Ross,

"The call to 'educate' desire... is one which comes instinctively to intellectuals, all too willing to propose or act out their reformist zeal on behalf of others" (198).

Certainly, the anti-porn roadshow offers a good example of this problematic urge to "educate" desire by imposing one politically correct, gender-identified reading. Anti-porn discourse perpetuates porn's status as low culture and considers its consumers uneducable. But if pornography is understood as a product for masturbatory male consumers ("raincoaters"), then both porn and its pleasurable use are ceded to men.

Zealous educators need to reconsider what Ross identifies as porn's basic appeal:

"Pornography's popularity lies in its *refusal* to be educated" (orig. emphasis, Ross, 201).

Taking the contrary attitude expected of it across the education/ spectacle divide, pornography is discursively linked to education as its quintessential juvenile delinquent. As Jennifer Wicke puts it,

"Pornography peeps out from its brown paper wrappers and asks how a culture reproduces itself, in and through the images and texts it disseminates, in a paideia at large" (63).

By engaging with porn, pro-sex activists and academics confront the bad boy/LIVE GIRL pair that underpins the premise that porn refuses to be educated. To accept this premise is to deny women's efforts to blur the boundaries between the education/spectacle divide precisely to interrogate pornography and to produce generic innovations that engage both sexual desires and sexual knowledges.[16]

It is time for a theory of sexual subjectification to counter the theory of objectification (Birken, 149). It is time to recognize women's stake in sex education and sexy entertainment. As a self-identified consumer/producer of porn and sex education, Bright offers an example of what Ross calls the politics of the "liberatory imagination" (177). If it is possible that such a politics can "set the agenda for a radical democracy beyond liberal pragmatism," then feminist educators should continue to seek alliances with both pro-sexers and health care activists (177). In Alice Echols words, we may

"reclaim the radical feminist vision that joined sexual liberation with women's liberation" (66).

By liberating feminism from its association with the anti-porn discourse, we can make a difference in students' lives precisely by acknowledging the ways in which popular culture invites them to be (hetero)sexual subjects.

After the MIT panel, several people, especially self-identified queers and lesbians, expressed appreciation that the event included my presentation on porn by and for women. Little did they know that it took much persuasion to be included precisely because the organizers wanted to ignore women's engagement with porn in their zeal to prove it only appeals to misogynists. Inevitably, this attitude perpetuates a climate of shameful secrecy that suppresses the diversity of women's sexualities.

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NOTES

1. During lengthy discussions with these science students in advance of the panel, I tried to explain the range of methods/approaches that are typically used to analyze media and to convince them that the image-based anti-porn slide show was not at all typical in the field.

2. Further research needs to be done to write a history of campus activism against pornography in relation to the popularization of the anti-porn position. From the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties, both sexually explicit and explicitly X-rated movies were shown periodically on some college campuses, including the University of New Mexico (where I was an undergraduate) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (where recent organizers had no sense of this local history). Such movies were scheduled for a number of reasons, such as to indicate students' sexual liberation as legal adults and to promote fraternal bonding, but they probably best served to increase revenues for campus theaters. With the feminist anti-pornography movement in the 80s, student groups effectively stopped screenings of DEBBIE DOES DALLAS (UNM) and DEEP THROAT and HIGH SCHOOL MEMORIES (MIT, as reported by McCain).

3. See Schaefer's dissertation, *"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!": A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*.

4. Bright has appeared in many sexually explicit poses for photographs: balancing over a horse to expose her naked ass or dressed as a dominatrix for *On Our Backs*; with a "Macho Slut" button pinned near her cleavage for *Outweek*; wrapped in a black leather sheath for her book *Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World*. In addition, she has been in a porn movie, BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR, THE SEQUEL (Mitchell Brothers, 1986); she appeared as Susie Sexpert in Monika Treut's first feature, THE VIRGIN MACHINE (1989); and she makes a cameo appearance in the women's bar scene in BOUND (Wachowski Brothers, 1996), a caper film revolving around lesbian lovers, for which Bright also served as a consultant.

5. Henry Jenkins noted that publishers are likely to pay Bright much more as a popular writer than they are likely to pay scholarly authors, such as Dines. While this is true, it should also be noted that Bright's visibility is contingent on the currently favorable attitude toward lesbianism in some aspects of the marketplace.

6. In her essay, "Live Sex Acts," Lauren Berlant explores the problems and limits to arguments that hold up a universalized young girl as the ultimate victim. Draft, April 14, 1994, distributed through the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies, Harvard University.

7. According to Chuck Kleinhans, DREAMWORLD's warning is meant to prepare viewers for dramatized rape scenes from THE ACCUSED (1988, d. J. Kaplan), which are appropriated to support Jhally's critique of MTV. But Jhally's advance warning does not specify the source of upcoming "graphic sexual violence," leaving viewers on alert throughout the video presentation.

8. In *Girls Lean Back Everywhere*, Edward de Grazia describes many occasions in which Senators and Congressmen screened hardcore movies at the insistence of conservatives, especially the National Organization of Citizens for Decent Literature (CDL), who sought to vilify liberal justices and politicians. De Grazia notes that in the late 60s conservative senators and the CDL sought to link explicit materials to abuses of actual women by recounting specific cases in which the male perpetrator was allegedly motivated by exposure to such materials. "Horror stories" of this kind would in the late seventies be staple testimony before the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (Meese Commission)" (536). That the feminist anti-porn slide show was preceded by propaganda created by anti-

porn conservatives speaks to the relative friendliness of conservative politicians to radical feminists on this particular issue.

9. For more on lesbian readings, see Chris Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Re-Orientations in Film and Video* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), reviewed in this issue of Jump Cut by Jane Gaines.

10. That "meat grinder" image has logged a lot of miles on the anti-porn roadshow circuit. In a "Script" (circa 1983) produced for a slide show by Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM), the narrative to accompany the *Hustler* image reads, "This 1978 cover of *Hustler* implies that women are meat to be ground" (6). Dines not only continues to use this dated image, but also regularly features the poster for *SNUFF*, which she erroneously claims shows a real murder. As Eric Schaefer and I have argued, the release of *SNUFF* in 1976 prompted a discursive shift in which porn was taken, especially by feminists, as evidence of sexual violence against women rather than as a progressive expression of sexual liberation. Following on this shift, the *Hustler* cover should be understood historically as a hyberbolic response to the feminist anti-pornography movement (Kipnis, 159). Flynt's "meat grinder" shot sardonically followed the specious anti-porn argument — porn kills women — to its extreme end. According to Laura Kipnis, "This cover was instrumental in the founding, the following year, of Women Against Pornography" (219).

11. The reference to *PSYCHO* is not coincidental. As illustrated by Dines' own publicity, anti-porn feminists and some feminist film scholars have singled out Hitchcock's films for evidence of violence against women. When I was an undergraduate at the University of New Mexico, I took a popular culture class with a professor who argued that the shower scene not only offered sexual violence as content but also was a formal demonstration of sexual violence by the director against the implicitly feminized film body. This argument points to the limits of a theory that presumes the following: 1) that the film body is gendered female; and/or 2) that the ideal film is a holistic body (rather than the sum of its component shots). Not surprisingly, this professor promoted the anti-porn argument and frequently used the slide show for this form of cultural critique. Although I pursued different approaches, I am indebted to this professor for encouraging me to study popular culture.

12. *THE MEETING OF TWO QUEENS* (1991, C. Barriga) offers a similar reconstruction — a meta-narrative of lesbian desire — by editing shots from Dietrich and Garbo movies so that the women appear to fall in love with each other.

13. Unfortunately, Chandler thereby undermined the intent of her own presentation, "How to Empower Women and Represent Women in the Sex Industry."

14. Given their emergence in the seventies, it is not surprising that the feminist anti-pornography assumption about gendered competency echoes the theory of the male gaze and the transvestite-female spectator popularized in feminist film studies through Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

15 The term, "Final Girl," is taken from Carol Clover's *Men, Women, and*

Chainsaws (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992).

16. This argument is elaborated in my dissertation, "Desiring Ourselves: Sexology, Pornography, and Feminist *Ars Erotica*."

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Sex instruction videos "One finger on the pause button"

by Robert Eberwein

from *Jump Cut*, no. 41, May 1997, pp. 36-41

copyright *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 1997, 2006

Linda Williams and Gertrud Koch have observed that the connection of "education" and pornography is not new. Williams mentions how, following the 1966 U.S. Supreme Court decision defining First Amendment Freedom of Speech rights, essentially pornographic works appeared such as *CENSORSHIP IN DENMARK* and *HISTORY OF THE BLUE MOVIE* (96-97). And Koch explains,

"Numerous studies on the social history of pornography indicate that the pornography producers have always perceived themselves as contributing to sex research" (22).

Recent developments in the use of explicit sexual material for education suggest the usefulness of examining current materials from a more complex perspective.

For example, appearing on a segment of "CNN's Sonya Live" (May 11, 1992), Dr. Judy Seifer, sex therapist who devised the *BETTER SEX VIDEO SERIES*, states,

"I think this video series gives couples...an opportunity to see what they don't want to do as [well as] what they might want to explore. Ideally, I would like for couples to watch it with one person's finger on the pause button and stop and talk about it and say, 'Hey, I never thought about doing that. Is that something you're interested in?' Or, 'Gee, it didn't look like that when we tried it'..."(14).

In Volume II, "Advanced Sexual Techniques," Seifer suggests couples use the tapes "like a textbook. Stop the tape; freeze the frame, like rereading a chapter." Similarly, Dr. Sandra Scantling, sex therapist who devised the *ORDINARY COUPLES, EXTRAORDINARY SEX* video series, tells viewers in Volume I, "Discovering Extraordinary Sex," "Feel free to stop this tape at any time to discuss areas of interest to you."

Such directives introduce major issues I will explore here, specifically strategies used to legitimate the viewing experience and therapists' relation to their assumed audiences of heterosexual couples. In addition, I will identify the series' paradigmatic elements while assessing the tapes' cultural and ideological significance.

I use the BETTER SEX and ORDINARY COUPLES, EXTRAORDINARY SEX series as my primary focus because they are the most popular, as evidenced by sales figures and advertising. According to Karen Karbo, the BETTER SEX series commanded 90% of the market as of November 1993 (64). Benedict Carey asserts that this series had sold almost one million copies by October 1995 (47). Originally each series seemed separately marketed and advertised by two different organizations: The Townsend Institute (Seifer) and the Sinclair Institute (Scantling). (As Don Steinberg has noted, the word "institute" has the effect of making the organization "sound like it has students and a campus" [34]). I was told that originally the two entities were sister organizations. But recent advertisements now indicate that the Sinclair Institute markets both tapes.

This fact probably explains the two series' similar advertisements, including at least one actual duplication. Specifically, in a Sinclair advertisement for SEXUAL POSITIONS FOR LOVERS, a tape not part of the ORDINARY COUPLES series, we see a couple clad in towels, both wearing wedding rings and embracing, with the caption: "Sex Education for Me? Know-how is still the best aphrodisiac." The same caption accompanies another couple clad in towels but lacking wedding rings for Townsend's BETTER SEX series.

The two series' advertisements, which typically include a picture of a couple wearing variable amounts of clothing and engaged in some form of embrace, have appeared in a variety of venues including *Psychology Today*, *Health*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *US*, *Esquire*, *Playboy*, *Details*, *GQ*, *Men's Journal*, *Men's Health*, *American Woman*, *Woman's Own*, *New Woman* and *Cosmopolitan*.

The dynamic of the relation between sex therapists and viewers begins with a complex ideological process, initiated by the placement of the ads in "respectable" sources. The range of both men's and women's magazines indicates this. The men's magazines target middle- to upper-middle class readers. The women's magazines show greater range. For example, *Health* is clearly for upper-middle class women; *American Woman* seems targeted for lower-middle-class women and deals only with romance and sex. *US*, *Psychology Today*, and, in particular, *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times Book Review* suggest a mainstream middle- to upper-middle class readership. Obviously none of these magazines and newspapers is associated with adult magazine shops. Rather, all are available anywhere — hence, understood as forming part of anyone's reading experience.

With one exception, the advertisements use two strategies to interest potential customers. The first involves photographs of apparently happy, sexually satisfied couples — evidence that seems to testify to the tapes' efficacy. The second focuses on the therapists themselves. For example, different advertisements describe Judy Seifer as "one of the country's most respected experts on sexuality" or "one of the country's foremost experts on sexuality." Dr. Scantling is described variously as "one of America's most renowned sex educators and counselors" or "a nationally known psychologist and sex therapist."

The copy legitimatizing the therapists continues with more information in the videos. Each tape begins with by credentialing Seifer and Scantling as well as the male associates who assist them. Such credentialing echoes that in Dr. Ruth

Westheimer's earlier television show on the Lifetime network, as discussed by Mimi White (37). We learn of the therapists' degrees, relevant past experience and present appointments. The therapists, wearing glasses and dressed conservatively, are seen in professional-looking sets representing offices. Scantling sometimes directly addresses viewers as she sits in front of a computer.

The verification of these women as degree holders and professionals is enhanced by presenting them as disinterested and caring specialists who see a way to help their audience. Repeatedly they insist on respect for each partner's needs and desires, and they stress establishing loving, respectful relationships. An implicit and unspoken moral contract is presumed: "If you are watching me, you must be a trustworthy member of a heterosexual couple. Since I am a trustworthy professional, I would not show you anything, even if it can be described as arousing, that isn't acceptable to watch." Validating spectatorship is vitally important to counteract any sense of mere voyeurism—the mode of viewing associated inextricably with pornography.

This is a more complicated version of what Jane Banks and Patricia Zimmermann have observed about Dr. Ruth's earlier television show in which callers described various sexual problems and received counsel. They describe the auditory presentation of the problems and advice and the particular physical arrangement of furniture in the set's mise-en-scene, which they see as neutralizing voyeurism:

"The studio audience represents the sexual health of the home viewer, the set duplicates the home of the spectator (but with more perfect taste), and Westheimer's clinical and medical gaze professionalizes and thus effaces the voyeurism of the viewer" (64).

Moreover, the presence of the clinician like Dr. Ruth and her "clinical gaze and her diagnoses of sexual problems situate sexuality within the authority of science and the power of the clinic, both institutions of 'benevolent' regulation" (69).

Explicitly accepting therapists' professionalism and implicitly agreeing to a contract of trust, viewers are positioned to enter into similar legitimating relations with the material presented. That is, embedded in the proposition, "We can watch this in the first place because the therapist is credentialed and sincere, and we are seeking improvement in our sex life," is the corollary, "The material itself that we are watching must be something we can watch in good conscience." This positioning both denies suspect voyeurism and negates any act's potential illegitimacy.

Significantly the only ad I have seen that doesn't refer to therapists' credentials appeared in September 1994 in *Details*, a magazine for upscale men in their twenties and thirties interested in issues such as contemporary fashion, music and media. Here we see a partially dressed young man and woman in cowboy and cowgirl garb (actually the back jacket photo from BETTER SEX VIDEO 7, ADVANCED SEXUAL FANTASIES). There is no mention of Dr. Seifer. Rather, the caption reads:

"Want Sex to Last for Hours A 10-minute roll in the hay may be fun, but why stop there? That's why THE BETTER SEX VIDEO SERIES was created — so that healthy, sexually active guys like you could enhance their sexual pleasure with their

sexual fantasies."

The absence of even the semblance of an educational pitch legitimated by the academy says as much about an advertising campaign targeted at young males as it does about the dominant practice used overwhelmingly in the other ads, stressing a combination of pleasure and education. It also reflects awkwardly on the prevailing pitch's candor and on Dr. Seifer's comments to "couples" presumably watching the tapes.

Commentary from magazine reviewers of the tapes also relates to this problematic issue of a targeted audience of heterosexual couples. Specifically, as noted, Seifer and Scantling advise couples to use the pause and freeze frames. In contrast, writing in *Men's Health*, reviewer Don Steinberg says:

"It can be argued persuasively that these [sex therapy] tapes are actually aimed at men alone, perhaps those legitimately searching for techniques that can help in the trenches. (But be prepared to hit fast-forward when the tape inevitably gets to 'Gary pleasuring himself.')" (34).

Maury Levy, reviewing the BETTER SEX series for *Playboy*, describes it as:

"Three-vid tour of everyone's favorite subject, produced especially for couples. Hot footage is maddeningly cooled by sugary commentary — but that's what the FF button's for" (26).

His attitude is echoed by Karen Karbo in *Redbook* who says of Seifer's advice: "After you get the gist, you'll thank modern technology for the fast-forward button" (64). These comments somewhat undercut the assumptions about the presumed audience's heterogeneity and the value of the experts' legitimatizing commentary. Whose finger, one wonders, will be on the pause or fast forward button?

Even more of an issue is the explicit sexual activity. *Playboy* and *Redbook* reviewers' advice to skip the commentary with the fast forward button connects tellingly to Steinberg's observation:

"Sex-help tapes are being made by everyone from certified psychologists to erotica merchants...But when it comes to showing the nitty-gritty aspects of sex, if you turn down the audio, you can't always tell the video made by the doctor from the one made by the erstwhile porn producer" (34).

Elements in the tapes invoke pornographic conventions, and in some cases "adult" — i.e., pornographic — material actually appears. In BETTER SEX VIDEO 3, for example, we watch an extended sequence in which one of the married couples engages in various sex acts in the wife's office. She is clad only in high heels, not atypical for pornographic film. The prolonged sequence concludes with a money shot, a staple of porn, as the expert's voice-over commentary intones, "Some women get very excited when men ejaculate on their breast."

In BETTER SEX VIDEO 7, commentary designed to answer questions viewers might have about their sexual life is supplemented with sequences supposedly

enacting harmless fantasies. In response to, "How often do people fantasize," Marty Klein, a *Playboy* writer appearing intermittently here as a commentator, explains that fantasies are common. We then watch Fantasy # 29, "Primitive Love," a pornographic sequence in which a caged man and two women dressed as stone age characters engage in a number of sexual activities accompanied by two participants' voices over describing their experience and the pleasure caused by their joint fantasy. As the sequence ends, we learn from a title card that: "The fantasy scenes in this program were selected by sex educators from popular adult videos." Moreover, "the narration was scripted in order to illustrate fantasy themes." Thus, the voices over we hear may or may not have come from the original pornographic sequence.

Aspects of the scene from Volume 3 and the general content of Volume 7 as well as the advertisement in *Details* undermine the BETTER SEX VIDEOS' ethos that we are observing loving couples who offer heterosexual audiences examples of how to enrich their sex lives. The Primitive Fantasy sequence in particular echoes Steven Marcus' useful observation about literary pornography, which he says does not explore "relations between human beings":

"It is in fact somewhat of a misnomer to call these representations 'relations between human beings.' They are rather juxtapositions of human bodies, parts of bodies, limbs, and organs; they are depictions of positions and events, diagrammatic schema for sexual ballets — actually they are more like football plays than dances; they are at any rate as complicated as either" (274).

I will return to Marcus and his concept of "pornotopia" at the conclusion of the paper.

The language in the advertisements for ORDINARY COUPLES suggests,

"WARNING: [the series] is highly explicit and is intended for adults over the age of 21 only. All videos contain nudity and explicit lovemaking."

In another ad, the Institute anticipates that "Couples are likely to become highly aroused when viewing these tapes together." Absolutely explicit sexual activities are common to both series. Couples and individuals engage in various forms of sexual activity including masturbation, foreplay and intercourse, and they employ all manner of sex toys, vibrators and dildoes. In addition to the inoculating effect of the therapists' credentials, the contract of trust, and the denial of voyeurism, the explicit sexual activities are partially validated by various strategies that bear examination from an ideological perspective.

First, the script establishes participants' identities and professions. At the end of the BETTER SEX VIDEO series, both aspects are either overtly revealed or implicitly understood as patently false for the sake of privacy, but at the beginning of our acquaintance, we are informed about the jobs and responsibilities of Mary and Robert or Greg and Carrie, etc., and whether or not they are married and have children. Their professions include such diverse roles as airline pilot, social worker, partner in a health club, and business person. (The faintly glamorous and/or serious nature of the couples' professions is somewhat undercut when Gary and

Donna admit on "CNN's Sonya LIVE" that they did nude modeling prior to participating in the BETTER SEX series.)

Second, we encounter a characteristic mise-en-scene that works ideologically to establish the couples' acceptability. They all seem to live in upscale California homes, graced with spacious bedrooms and the inevitable hot tubs. Scantling's series in particular situates participants in grand homes and locations. Third, the couples' ages range from mid-20s to 50s and their appearance suggests ordinariness and physical well being, that is, "normality" rather than glamour and movie-star sex appeal. One reviewer of the tapes found the use of "ordinary people rather than impossibly beautiful models liberating" (Mallet). With the exception of one African American couple, all the couples in both series are white, a point to be developed below.

Some other paradigmatic elements worth noting include the following. We see occasional scenes or suggestions of purportedly "actual" therapeutic situations. BETTER SEX 1 begins by introducing us to several couples who appear in "before" and "after" scenes, marking their progress as more successful lovers. They discuss their "before" status in voice over as we see them supposedly reenacting earlier inadequacies in such behaviors, including indifferent, hasty intercourse or failure to respond to a partner's sexual invitation. In ORDINARY COUPLES 3, Scantling talks with two couples (one being Fred and Samantha, the African Americans) as if on a television talk show but without an audience. After each explains their problems, Scantling counsels remedies such as role playing. We see scenes of the couples enacting the remedies, and then we return to the set as they report their success to Scantling.

The tapes have warnings, qualifications and disavowals throughout, especially at the conclusion. One constant warning is to respect each partner's wishes and not push anyone beyond what s/he feels comfortable with. Neither Seifer nor Scantling invokes infallibility or guarantees the value of their advice. Viewers are told to seek professional help if their problems significantly trouble them. The ORDINARY COUPLES series provides addresses and phone numbers of legitimate counseling agencies.

The dangers of AIDS and diseases attending unprotected sex are mentioned but not with the severity or urgency one might hope for or expect. BETTER SEX 1 promises a discussion of sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS, in Volume 2, where it occurs in the context of anal sexual intercourse but seems surprisingly perfunctory. Volume 7 opens with a warning about safe sex, fittingly given the sexual fantasies this tape explores. Each Sinclair tape begins,

"It is important to practice 'safer sex' techniques and be responsible about birth control. Unprotected sex should only be engaged in by committed couples who know they are risk free."

I want now to return to Fred and Samantha, the African American couple mentioned earlier, since their presence is central to ideological concerns raised by the series. Fred and "Sam," as she is labeled in the advertisements, are the only African American couple in these series. They do not appear on any of the jacket photographs but do appear in the Sinclair Institute catalog. Their image appears once in an advertisement in *Heart and Soul*, a health magazine targeted at upscale

African American women, where they are named and identified as appearing in tapes 2 and 3. In addition, there is a dearth of advertising by either series in African American oriented magazines. My exhaustive survey of *Ebony* and less systematic examinations of *Essence*, *Jet*, *Black Elegance*, *Young Black Woman* and other magazines directed at African Americans yielded only two ads for the Xandria catalog.

Significantly, in the tapes we first see this couple on a blanket outdoors in the teaser ad at tape 2's end, a scene that anticipates what will occur during their upcoming role-playing "therapy." The only other couple given shorter attention in the series is a white couple named Gary and Mair; Mair appears to be middle eastern. But of all the couples, only Fred and Sam are never shown within a bedroom. We see them having sex on/at a table in a well-appointed dining room and in two scenes outdoors. During the dining room scene, Fred's sexual urgency is signaled by the fact that he still has his trousers on for the first part of the encounter. Although both Gary and Mair and Fred and Sam have sex outdoors, the white couple is also seen in a bedroom. However, even in the parallel outdoor scenes, there is a racially inflected difference. Gary and Mair's one outdoor scene is preceded by Gary (clothed) playing the guitar as Mair dances to the music. Fred and Sam's second outdoor scene is preceded by Fred (nude) playing a large African drum as Sam dances to the drumbeat.

There may be other African Americans in the BETTER SEX VIDEO series in tapes I have not seen. But the only one I have seen appears in Volume 7, *Advanced Sexual Fantasies*. Here an African American male appears specifically in the context of two guilty fantasies. The first presents a lesbian fantasy with white women after the question: "If I fantasize something bad, does it mean I want to do it?" The second, "Fantasy 34, The Swimming Party" presents an African American male's fantasy about having sex with a blond woman at a swimming pool. Presented with his voice over under the category of "something bad," the treatment of this fantasy seems to suggest that what is bad is interracial sex. Given how many sexual activities occur through all the tapes in pools and tubs, aquatic sex is surely innocuous.

Judging on the basis of what I have seen, African American sexuality would seem to be the repressed of both series, evidenced in both advertising and the tapes' enactments. The paucity of advertising in part gives testimony to the near invisibility of African Americans in mainstream culture, a fact underscored by the seemingly desperate identification of Fred and Sam in the one ad that names the tapes in which they appear. When the tapes do present African Americans, it is in contexts which covertly reinforce their status as the Other. The tapes deny them access to the *mise-en-scene* enjoyed by the other participants and correspondingly situate them more emphatically in settings that suggest unbridled primitive sexuality.

To conclude, a question that has engaged me since beginning work on these sex therapy videos is their location on our cultural map. Michel Foucault, a figure often invoked by scholars as they talk about sex and the media, has relevance here. Both Marc LaFontaine and Bill Nichols in particular refer to Foucault's model of the panopticon, which Foucault draws from Jeremy Bentham and used in *Discipline and Punish* to describe the exercise of power. For LaFontaine, Dr. Ruth exercises a similar kind of authority: "Television simulates panoptic space..., a field of

symbolization" (131). "What makes a televised Dr. Ruth a virtual panopticon is its simulation of the illusion of surveillance (132).

Nichols refers to Linda Williams' use of the term "pornotopia," a word coined by Steven Marcus in his study of Victorian pornography to denote "that vision which regards all of human experience as a series of exclusively sexual events or conveniences" (216). Nichols notes the similarities between pornography and ethnography and connects the latter to the panopticon:

"Ethnography is a kind of legitimated pornography, a pornography of knowledge...Pornography is a strange, 'unnatural' form of ethnography, salvaging orgasmic bliss from the seclusion of the bedroom" (210).

"Sexual actors are watched, while cultural actors are watched over. The paradigmatic representation of these two states is symbolized by voyeurism in pornography and the panopticon in ethnography" (212).

Interestingly, the graphics in BETTER SEX VIDEOS 2 evoke the panopticon. Each segment begins with three moving bands of images on the top, middle and bottom of the screen. Each image depicts a particular sexual activity with an accompanying title, such as "masturbation" or "fellatio," that the video will treat. After a brief display of the three moving bands, the camera zooms in on the one image/title that is the topic of the segment. This strategy seems to replicate the kind of panoptic gaze Nichols sees operating in ethnography. We see simultaneously an array of separate sexual acts from a powerful viewing position and then focus on one.

Although the connection with Foucault has relevance, it does not explain enough about how the tapes occupy cultural space. Perhaps, drawing on anthropologist Victor W. Turner, we could say that analogously the tapes have a "liminal" or border status, in that they

"elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (94).

The tapes are not pornography although some of their elements are drawn from or evoke pornography. They are not ethnography, although their examination of sexual activity presents information about contemporary sexual practices.

David James' useful comment on amateur home sex videos is also relevant here. Looked at from the perspective of the "liminal," these also seem to occupy a unique space on the cultural map. James observes:

"As text, the compilation [of sex scenes] differs from commodity pornography. Since the tape shamelessly proclaims erotic representation as its *raison d'être*, it is not obliged to disguise itself as either narrative or documentary...Nor...are the sexual encounters or the video photography of them framed by any normative metadiscourse that would justify their introduction as anthropological data or evidence of pathology" (33).

Sex therapy videos occupy a unique cultural space. At least in conception, they offer viewers an opportunity to watch explicit sexual activities as students seeking information rather than as voyeurs. They assume a heterosexual audience of couples capable of imitating not only the sexual mechanics but also of adopting the loving and caring emotions enacted by the participants. Adapting Judith Mayne's explanation of the "mapping" of contexts in terms of cultural studies (95-96), one could say the videos constitute a way to negotiate complex and contradictory texts as well as aspects of our sexuality, legitimatizing what has been hitherto forbidden as they authorize our panoptic gaze.

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Bound and Gagged Pornography unbound

by Eric Schaefer

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Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America by Laura Kipnis, New York: Grove Press, 1996; Cloth, 240 pages, ISBN: 0-8021-1584-5.

Two decades ago most of the furor surrounding pornography tended to center on sex's emergence from the bedroom and the private realm into public spaces. But in the ensuing years porn has moved off the streets, out of the theaters, and back into the homes of Americans via home video, the Internet and CD-ROMs. Porn's retreat into private spaces has failed to quell anti-porn activists. It is somewhat ironic then that as sexually explicit material has become less visible in public, it has inspired more articles and books about its cultural status. The pornography "debates" have, however, become largely formulaic-and in most instances they are as predictable as the form that porn's critics purport to examine. Camps at both poles, whether First Amendment absolutists or the rightwing Christian/ "MacDworkinite" cabal, tend to base appeals on emotionally-charged rhetoric, be it about the preservation of constitutional freedoms or the protection of vulnerable women and children. Lost in the din are questions about pornography's role in our culture-beyond its status as the spark for contentious debate.

Laura Kipnis' *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* attempts to reframe the discourse on porn. That she is able to accomplish this speaks to her ability to cut through much of the dissonance that attends pornography on both a formal or generic level, and as a site of social ferment. The author's willingness to challenge conventional ideas about, and approaches to, porn promises to reinvigorate the discourse of anti-censorship forces.

Kipnis opens *Bound and Gagged* by asserting that "the differences between pornography and other forms of culture are less meaningful than their similarities" (viii). Thus from the first pages she moves out of the typical stance toward porn in which it is seen as "low," "marginal," or unconnected to the culture at large. Rather than seeing porn as some sort of cultural barnacle, Kipnis asserts that it "is a form of cultural expression...an essential form of contemporary national culture" (viii). By asserting that porn is as complex as (and in some cases as empty as) other cultural forms, Kipnis opens the reader to the possibility that it can be profoundly political. By avoiding the typical defensive position on porn, Kipnis establishes a

level playing field which enables her to construct an argument that avoids many of the terms on which the "debate" has hinged:

"Whether pornography should or shouldn't exist is pretty much beside the point. It does exist, and it's not going to go away. Why it exists, what it has to say, and who pornography thinks it's talking to, are more interesting questions than all these doomed, dreary attempts to debate it, regulate it, or protest it. Just what is pornography's grip on the cultural imagination?" (x-xi)

The author acknowledges those "dreary attempts" without dismissing them out of hand, but is anxious to move on to attempt to answer the question that drives the book.

Bound and Gagged opens with a long chapter on the status of "Fantasy in America." Kipnis details the facts in the case of Daniel DePew, a gay Washington, D.C. man into the SM subculture, who was snared through the Internet by San Jose police officers working with the FBI. In a long and expensive operation, law enforcement officials drew DePew and his "co-conspirator," Dean Lambey, into a fantasy scenario about making a child porn snuff film. Fantasy is the operative term, since law enforcement agencies had no intention of following through on the plan — but neither did Lambey or DePew. Kipnis details the important role that fantasies played in DePew's life, and his sex life in particular. From his standpoint, the come-on used by the cops was merely the catalyst in an elaborate seduction scene. But for DePew the seduction "scene" turned into a law enforcement trap.

"Fantasy permeated all levels of the DePew case, because as a culture, we're never more beset by fantasy than in our assertions about the purity of our motives, and in our fantastical beliefs in our own capacity for rationality (7).

DePew and the police continually misread each other's words and actions: DePew believing that he was headed for a consensual sexual encounter, the police convinced that their mark was intent on murder. Despite their misreadings, or perhaps because of them, DePew's fantasies and the "fantasies and ambitions of the two undercover cops playing the roles of tough-guy pornographers" depended on each other.

The chapter on the DePew case is a mix of incongruous elements. On the one hand, there is a comic quality to the childlike zeal of the cops and the FBI, which is only matched by their inept Keystone Kops efforts to manufacture a conspiracy that would justify the months of time and hundreds of thousands of dollars poured into the investigation. On the other hand, the relentless efforts of the government to entrap and prosecute DePew is as chilling as anything out of Kafka. Most disturbing is that in the final analysis there was no analysis. The law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor, the judge and jury, and the press, failed to look beyond the surface of DePew's fantasies. As Kipnis notes,

"The jury may have been disturbed by the theatrical violence of [DePew's] sex life, but that violence had a complex history; it had a narrative" (62).

By taking his fantasies at face value, by failing to interpret them, the jury chose to jail a man for something that did not happen, nor was it intended to happen.

Kipnis argues that pornography, and fantasy, demand interpretation, asserting that our current cultural approach to porn has been "intellectually shriveled," and does not take into account the complexity of the form. As she notes, there is little serious attention paid to fantasy in our culture. Because it is, after all, just fantasy, it appears to lack the pressing quality of real world or everyday concerns. And yet most of us probably spend almost as much time engaged in fantasy as in any other pursuit, whether it involves sexual fantasies, dreams of exotic places, a new job, or striking it big in the lottery. Hours of interviews with DePew allow Kipnis to show how his fantasies operated in great detail — too much detail, some may argue. But the abundance of material requires the reader to engage in precisely the kind of careful interpretation that Kipnis wishes to see accorded to pornography on a more general level. DePew's SM scenarios, and his constantly shifting subject position within them, served as a mechanism for negotiating his own rather fragile sense of masculinity. Kipnis convincingly demonstrates that they were just fantasies — albeit important ones for him.

While DePew's sexual imagination was incompatible with social norms, if it posed a danger to anyone it was to himself through his own naiveté. Whatever staying power the anti-pornography position has rests largely on its equation of fantasy with intent. Kipnis exposes the danger of this fear in her analysis of the DePew case. She notes that none of the well-funded experimental research on pornography's effects explores what "fantasies of violence and fantasized sexual violence mean" (13). In this instance, one person's fantasy becomes another's offense warranting prosecution.

Chapters on "Clothes Make the Man" and "Life in the Fat Lane" examine other fringe forms of porn: transvestite porn and porn that takes the obese — men and women — as objects of desire. Her analysis of transvestite material, including both transvestites and transsexuals, shows how pornography and gender relations within it are far more complicated than most porn critics are willing or able to admit:

"If you even tentatively acknowledge the possibility that 'pornography' is a far from coherent or stable category, if you even fleetingly concede that its motives and purposes could be less black and white than 'graphic subordination' or the 'dehumanization of women,' it becomes far more difficult to either employ it as a political rallying point or to hold it responsible for the range of social ills it now stands charged of causing (65).

Kipnis explores the therapeutic discourse of transvestite porn, suggesting that its anxiety-alleviating properties have trickled down from mainstream women's culture. The core of the chapter is a comparison of photos in transvestite classified ads with the art of self-portraiture, in which both become "an aesthetic act of self-definition" (73). Using criteria from an essay on Cindy Sherman's self-portrait series, *Untitled Film Stills*, by art critic Arthur Danto, Kipnis suggests that the transvestite self-portraits in the classifieds are little different than the respected artist's work. Like Sherman's photos, the transvestite self-portraits are rich in meaning and "condense an entire drama" — in this case the drama of gender

assignment. Kipnis argues that the "perversions" enacted in the transvestite pictures have an aesthetic and, conversely, that conventional aesthetics are often perverse. The only discernible differences become ones of sublimation and class:

"inherent in these categorical distinctions between art and pornography are the class divisions that a distinctively high art works to maintain" (84).

This bolsters Kipnis' claims that pornography demands the "same degree of critical, interpretive acumen" (86) that tends to be reserved for art.

That interpretive acumen applied to porn reveals an anti-aesthetic at work, one which

"devotes itself to thwarting aesthetic conventions whenever it can, to disrupting our precious sensibilities at every turn...This is a social undertaking not without philosophical and political significance" (92).

Such significance is demonstrated vis-à-vis gender roles with the analysis of transvestite porn, in terms of consumer culture, identity politics, victim status, and body image in "fat porn," and with regard to gender and class in *Hustler* magazine. Chapter Four, "Disgust and Desire: *Hustler* Magazine," is a revised and somewhat streamlined version of "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*" which originally appeared in Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler's *Cultural Studies* (Routledge, 1992). Its inclusion in *Bound and Gagged* is very welcome since it is well integrated with the other chapters and furthers the overall aims of the book. The *Hustler* piece remains one of the most important essays on pornography and on the big three of cultural studies — race, class, and gender — to be published in the last ten years. It also stands as a model of applied cultural studies (i.e., an essay that actually does cultural studies rather than being simply another one about cultural studies). It stood out among dozens of articles in its previous venue, but here it finds a more meaningful context. Moreover, the essay does not strip Flynt or *Hustler* of their power to shock and offend in the way that THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT and the publisher's newfound status of talk show darling have tended to do. At the same time "Disgust and Desire: *Hustler* Magazine" offers a more compelling defense of Flynt than he has been able to muster in the face of charges that he is glamorized or heroized in Milos Forman's film.

The elegance and the power of Kipnis' book lies in the way she is able to shift her critique of pornographic discourse into broader social criticism via her discussion of the marginalized forms on which she focuses. By showing how pornography operates as a site for expressing a variety of cultural anxieties, she moves it squarely into the realm of political expression. This not only serves to make the advocacy of porn on First Amendment grounds even more crucial, but it adds a further dimension to the issue. Without stating it explicitly, Kipnis brings pornography into the realm of a human rights concern — one about the freedom to desire and love as one wants to, as long as it does not impinge on the rights of others. Those into fat-porn, transvestite material, and SM are presented as members of subcultures susceptible to persecution. Even the gross and often offensive words and images in *Hustler* are framed as working class attacks on elites. If such challenges can be countenanced in other forms, why not in porn, which is often far more blunt as it upsets the status quo?

Kipnis efforts to dislodge porn from its position as "low" culture and integrate it into the broader cultural environment is both her most audacious move and her greatest intellectual contribution to the discourse on the issue. Regrettably she avoids analyzing more mainstream porn — *Hustler* is the most "conventional" text discussed in the book. Even though she notes that *Bound and Gagged* does not offer an exhaustive survey, that it is a "strategic and selective one" (ix), the omission of straight forward "suck and fuck" material is significant. Certainly there is currently more academic cachet in dealing with the marginal, one from which I, too, have reaped benefits. However, locating the transgressive potential and attendant political possibilities among all those buffed, bouncing silicone starlets and wooden studs would offer a more complete assessment of the form and insulate *Bound and Gagged* from potential charges of parochialism.

In the final chapter of the book, "How to Look at Pornography," Kipnis summarizes arguments for viewing porn as part of the larger culture. She dismantles many of the positions of the anti-pornography contingent, drawing on a wildly varied cast of characters including Joycelyn Elders, Allan Bloom, Jeffrey Masson, and Catherine MacKinnon, to stage the effort. Here, she fuses the psychoanalytic and social theories balanced throughout the book.

Kipnis' reliance on psychoanalytic theory in *Bound and Gagged* is a curious one — she refers to it as a "dying lore" (8), and goes to some effort to show how readings of porn often contradict clinical literature, such as in her discussion of the transvestite material (69). She notes, however, that it remains the primary means by which our culture can grapple with fantasy. Her ambivalent relationship with psychoanalysis points up the continuing methodological challenge that it poses to critics—it is often as much a problem as it is a solution. Her discussion of Masson amply illustrates this. That said, Kipnis uses psychoanalysis far more facilely and pointedly than most as she explores the roots porn's appeal, and finally to make crucial points about its centrality to social life:

"Preserving an enclave for fantasy is an important political project for the following reason: pornography provides a forum to engage with a realm of contents and materials exiled from public view and from the dominant culture...But at the same time, within this realm of transgression, there's the freedom, displaced from the social world of limits and proprieties, to indulge in a range of longings and desires without regard to the appropriateness and propriety of those desires, and without regard to social limits on resources, object choices, perversity, or on the anarchy of imagination" (202-203).

Discourse on crucial social issues often takes place outside those forums that we like to think are reserved for carefully reasoned arguments. Indeed, as scholars have often demonstrated in recent years — and as the public has probably innately known all along — carnivals, comic books, exploitation films, and situation comedies can be the site of discussions about power, gender roles, and race that are treated gingerly, if at all, in officially sanctioned culture. With *Bound and Gagged* Kipnis reminds us that in pornography,

"Sweating naked bodies and improbably sexual acrobatics are only one side of the story" (163-164).

By going the trade book route, Kipnis has been able to shed much of the clotted language of the theoretical approaches she employs in favor of a relatively clear and direct style. She is able to condense the complex arguments of Freud, Mary Douglas, Bakhtin, and others without robbing them of their explanatory power. *Bound and Gagged* is both readable and laced with irreverent touches of humor — almost unheard of in books on the subject, but certainly a breath of fresh air. The book could be adopted in undergraduate classes on pornography, sexual representation, or gender issues. It could also be used as an excellent example of applied theory in graduate courses, an element that is all too often left out of the equation in graduate education. Like Linda Williams' *Hard Core* (University of California Press, 1989), *Bound and Gagged* promises to serve as a key text for historians and critics who work on pornography, as well for those who focus on issues of gender and marginalized cultures.

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Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies Queering feminist film theory

by Jane Gaines

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Review of Chris Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

We have come a long way in the nearly twenty years since the JUMP CUT Lesbian Special Section, really the first document to take feminist film theory to task for its failure to imagine the lesbian perspective.[1][\[open notes in new window\]](#) In those twenty years, the dominant feminist paradigm has been challenged from a number of vantage points, and to a degree it has been checked and modified. The appearance this year of Chris Straayer's important *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies* gives us the chance to take inventory, to see how far we have come and where we still need to go if we are to produce a feminist film theory that can imagine a plurality of sexualities, that is, if we are to produce a theory that is sufficiently "queer." Although there have been key essays in collections devoted to gay and lesbian cinema, this is actually the first single-authored book by a lesbian feminist film scholar to take up queer film and video representation as its subject, which means that it has much to prove and a lot of territory to cover.[2] Fortunately it does both.

Without launching any direct challenge, Straayer renders moot many of the basic theoretical premises of classical feminist film theory: that is, that cinema is organized around male to female voyeurism, cinema genders its spectator, and women are excluded from language. Straayer's strategy is to juxtapose a sociology of deviance (queerness, really) with the assumptions that cannot fathom the kind of sexual variegation and gender indeterminacy that she brings to our attention. Against the straitjacket of binarism, she sets an "infinite continuum of sexes," a possibility that not only challenges the great divide between male and female but undermines essentialist positions. She gives us a wonderful array of transgressors from transgendered lesbian Leslie Feinberg to Annie Sprinkle, prostitute-turned-performance-artist, feminists whose very existence critiques the heterosexual presumption that organizes Western culture.

The challenge to binarism is not necessarily new.[3] What is new is how feminism is being made to stretch, since in its current form neither academic nor movement feminism is able to accommodate the range of ways of being sexual which Straayer describes. As she says, these are sexualities that "pressure" feminism. Sometimes it

is hard to locate feminism in relation to the new troublemaking upstart, queer theory.[4] Queer theory is not antithetical to feminism because feminism is a kind of base line for it. Neither is queer theory just one of the many feminisms. Queer theory is feminism and more.[5]

Of the ways of applying feminism as a scholarly endeavor, feminist film theory has proven to be one of the more radical approaches — always staunchly pro-sex and never having the least flirtation with essentialist feminism. Emerging as it has more out of contemporary poststructuralist theory than out of the woman's movement, feminist film theory should encourage the idea of sexualities as made not born. And yet, what do we make of the fact that although many feminist film critics approvingly cite lesbian philosopher Judith Butler, there is still no major attempt to thoroughly rethink classical film theory in the light of her work?[6] Although Chris Straayer uses Butler as one of her starting points and shows us some of the ways Butler's thinking has contributed to questions of representation, in the end Straayer goes her own way. Taking off from Butler's well-known theorization of lesbianism's incoherence and multiplicity, even its "unknowability," Straayer goes further, asserting the full implications of the sexual continuum and the social construction of gender.

Women, she says, are not significantly different from men. Supporting her case with popular typologies, she finds an ideal in "female man-ness," a type which she distinguishes from the older "passing woman" from an earlier period of lesbian history. This is not an aberration from feminism. As I understand it, Straayer wants us to claim the social rights and the status that comes with being men as part of a project of "overthrowing" the categories of male and female. What is bold (and heretical in some camps) about this argument is that although no feminist would disclaim the right to power, many would want the earlier achieved separateness from men as persons as well as from the concept "men."

Yet Straayer's examples continue to argue for the impossibility of such an absolute distinction and go on to make the case for understanding a new suprasexualized type, the She-man, a crossdressed male performer who takes on the sexual attributes of male and female. Seen as early as David Bowie's performance in the 1979 music video "Boys Keep Swinging," this type's breakdown of the gender binary produces an "increase" in his/her sexuality, a "double sexual signification" that heightens the charge. Straayer wants to argue that the legacy of the She-man is not the misogynist transvestite performer but rather feminist performance art (Lynda Benglis and Carolee Schneeman), thus he/she uses female body codes as a source of potency.

Some skeptics may look at the She-man and say, "I just don't see it. It's still a putdown of women," and conclude that Straayer is reading the sumptuous and powerful "She" in the She-man performer against the grain. Maybe the test of Straayer's hypothesis is too obvious—we would just have to ask, "Who gets turned on by the She-man?" Until we have audience data to help us answer this question, I would argue that the She-man needs to be understood in relation to Straayer's entire project, which might be stated as "toward hermaphroditism," and which is perhaps best grasped in her discussion of Jennifer Miller, a bearded woman.

The subject of the videotape JUGGLING GENDER (Tami Gold, 1992), Jennifer Miller is one of Straayer's most dramatic examples of the variations in the sexual

continuum and the impossibility of absolutely fixing gender once and for all. As a lesbian, Jennifer identifies herself as a woman and passes as a man, yet her beard, her male secondary sex indicator, throws cultural feminism for a loop. For Straayer, Jennifer Miller exemplifies nature's deconstruction of itself, a naturally occurring exception to "nature's rule." Even better, Miller's exceptionality inspires her own deep critique of gender. "What is a woman?" Miller asks when excluded from cultural feminism's community. Theorizing Jennifer Miller's gender dilemma, Straayer talks about the "gender mirror," the way Miller's "multifaceted" gender is constructed day by day, based on others' responses and constituting gazes.

Film theory and its classical account of subjectivity are implicated on every page of this book, but one of the frustrations as well as the fascinations of *Deviant Eyes*, *Deviant Bodies* is that the wealth of suggestive detail and the stunning analyses of new independent film and video work remain just that. What are the implications for feminist film studies? Straayer's evidence would lead us to hypothesize cinema as one gender mirror among many (and not the most important gender mirror at that). The book signals a shift from the tone of 1970s film theory which often gave the impression that cinema was a major rather than a minor ideological apparatus. As for the gendered look, Straayer reiterates the fact that lesbian looking refutes the "unidirectional" male to female look which privileges the male spectator, requiring instead a bi-directional exchange of looks between same sex characters, placing the burden again on the lesbian spectator who eroticizes looks that may be coded as nonsexual. So far, these are not alterations which feminist film theory can't accommodate; to a degree, it already has since it is now pretty much standard to include lesbian perspectives in discussions of subjectivity and looking relations (although as "exceptions" to the rule).

Straayer really delivers the greatest challenge to what has become understood as "masquerade theory," the explanation of how it is that female viewers negotiate the problem of identifying with male characters. "Spectatorial transvestism" — the concept introduced into film theory in Laura Mulvey's 1981 "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by DUEL IN THE SUN" — is revealed as an appropriation of drag, using transvestism as a metaphor which misunderstands the dynamics of gay male crossdressing.[7] Further, Straayer tells us something that we all should have known: Freudian Joan Riviere's research which led to her theory of "womanliness-as-masquerade" had lesbian implications, ones ignored by Riviere herself as well as by later theorists.[8] What we haven't been able to see, says Straayer, is that behind the distancing mask of femininity is not a woman but a man. And why not? Only an unacknowledged essentialist assumption would hold that behind such an identity mask, behind a gender masquerade, the genuine gender of the one masked, his or her "real sex," can be found. Straayer seems already to have shown us the conservative implications of gender unmasking found in the comedy genre in her brilliant chapter, "Redressing the Natural," which had a critical reputation long before it finally appeared in this book. Several years before the publication of Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests*, Straayer analyzed the politics of crossdressing in popular film in this ground-breaking essay that announces a new subgenre: the temporary transvestite film.[9]

Reading *Deviant Eyes*, *Deviant Bodies* is a turn-on in several ways. First, it is exciting to think that the wonderful array of new feminist films and tapes which Straayer discusses will "blow the old paradigm out of the water." She leaves any

notion of counter-cinema (the feminist-modernist strategy for challenging classical form) in the dust. How can we still think of Chantal Ackerman's representation of prostitution in her modernist film JEANNE DIELMAN as startlingly revolutionary in contrast with Annie Sprinkle's close up of "female ejaculation" in THE SLUTS AND THE GODDESSES VIDEO WORKSHOP? Yet, with so much new work on sexuality one yearns for critical work to pull it together, to organize it the way 1970s feminist film theory organized the five or six canonical films that served as yardsticks for films and tapes which were never finally made. The range of independent feminist works that Straayer discusses — LET'S PLAY PRISONERS, Julie Zando, 1988; DELIRIUM, Mindy Faber, 1993; BORN TO BE SOLD: MARTHA ROSLER READS THE STRANGE CASE OF BABY M, Martha Rosier, 1988; KUSH, Pratibha Parmar, 1991 — is the range of works we now teach in feminist film courses, courses once organized around counter-cinema's "romanticization of exclusion," to quote Judith Mayne. But one senses that there is no return to the order of 1970s counter-cinema, an order produced out of scarcity (no films) and abstinence (no pleasure), which brings me to the second way in which the book is a turnon.[10]

Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies is all about specifically sexual pleasures, about representations of bodies for potential pleasure and bodies in the throes of pleasure, and none of this is pleasure by conventional means. Underground pleasures are brought up from the deep where they have been out of sight (for mainstream viewers and readers). Thus, one of the most important issues this book raises is the question, "Whose language of pleasure?" All of the old feminist issues of shared language and culture versus separate and oppositional (not necessarily shared) culture come rushing back. Dramatizing this issue of separate male and female cultures vs. shared culture is Straayer's report on her research into the lesbian pornography movement in combination with medical treatises. She details medical discussions of female castration and hypotheses about the female prostate gland, adding this physiological information to lesbian pornography's fascination with the dildo and female ejaculation. Confronting this "evidence," many heterosexual and lesbian feminists will want to challenge why women should discover their own new frontiers of sexuality in terms of male sexuality. What is touted as a new frontier, they might say, has not been new at all, but the same old patriarchal forms and desires, male anatomies rediscovered on female bodies.

Straayer is really beyond these questions. She is so far beyond the old concept that "women remain outside language" that her position may be unrecognizable to some feminists. First, I think she would argue that male and female in contemporary Western culture do share the same sexual iconography, but that different groups (gay male, heterosexual, lesbian) re-inflect apparently similar icons (say, the dildo) very differently. Remember, she is urging us to think in terms of the possibility of a kind of radical hermaphroditism (so far beyond the old 1970s androgyny that it appears exceedingly strange). She does not just argue for seeing male/female similarity in theory, that is, as a kind of logical conclusion to the constructivist approach to gender. Instead, she finds many examples to support a vision not of the "lesbian continuum" but of the "sexual continuum," which means that sexual practice leads and theory tries to follow.

The culminating case for this book is feminist Annie Sprinkle, whose own "pansexuality" may be the best model for the next stage of sexuality for which

Straayer is preparing us. An equally enthusiastic sex partner for men as well as women, Sprinkle is difficult if not impossible to locate in terms of conventional sexual coordinates. Her conversation with videomaker Phillip Roth in his videotape, 25-YEAR OLD GAY MAN LOSES HIS VIRGINITY TO A WOMAN, goes something like this:

Annie: "I just became a lesbian myself...It's a real adventure to change your identity, I think."

Phillip: "I wouldn't ever want to give up men."

Annie: "I wouldn't either."

Annie is especially thrilled with another new lover, the female-to-male transsexual featured in the tape LINDA/ LES AND ANNIE. The tape demonstrates their lovemaking with his/her reconstructed penis and Annie rhapsodizes about his "succulent nipples," and especially about his/her ability to understand female-specific biological processes. (She is on the last day of her period.) Annie Sprinkle shows us feminist and prostitute not as a contradiction in terms but as a combination signaling a new vanguard of sex radicalism.

One wonders on reading the end of this book if the *deja vu* experience has to do with a return to the moment in feminist history when feminism itself was still in the vanguard, when it still shocked and unsettled the more wary, when it pushed us to imagine feelings and positions that had been cordoned off as taboo. Like the AIDS education tapes and lesbian porn Straayer features, early women's films were neither slick nor respectable. Some twenty years ago the representation of childbirth on film was considered strange and forbidden. Perhaps the last frontier is the representation of the female orgasm, long suppressed by male-dominated mainstream pornography which has prided itself on "showing all" without censorship. But new questions arise: What does it mean to represent the unrepresentable when the scientific community also disputes the phenomenon's existence? Is visible female orgasm/ejaculation a wonderful case of Butler's performativity where discourse brings it into being before our very eyes? Is this a new power for the documentary video camera — the creation of bodily functions, perhaps an offshoot from the image's ability to make us "desire to do" something, in Straayer's terms. Will the new paradigm be about the move from the "desire to see" (voyeurism) to the "desire to do"?

"Queering" feminist film theory may mean that we no longer raise questions of representation in the old ways. But it would seem to be subject matter alone that now produces the transformation of representation as we now know it. Straayer asks, "Would a fully frontal gay and lesbian cinema need to use substitutions?" Radical content seems to have completely eclipsed questions of radical form. Indeed, Straayer spends relatively little time talking about camera positioning, image quality, or cutting. Still to be dealt with in the future, then, is the question of how new technological languages have brought the periphery incrementally toward the center. What was once secret is now available, what was once relatively direct is now highly mediated, first by cameras, now by a feminist analysis in book form. The secret discourses of lesbian pornography will be less and less able to elude mainstream discovery and consequent appropriation. Yet to worry about the survival of these discourses is perhaps needless in the face of the evidence of the resourcefulness and versatility of minority sex communities.

NOTES

1. Edith Becker, Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage, and B. Ruby Rich, "Lesbians and Film," *Jump Cut* 24/25 (1981), rpt. in *Jump Cut: Hollywood, Politics, and Counter-Cinema*, ed. Peter Steven (New York: Prager Press, 1985).
2. Extremely important but not entirely devoted to lesbian film and video are Mandy Merck, *Perversions: Deviant Readings* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 1993); *Bad Object-Choices*, eds. How Do! Look? Queer Film and Video (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991).
3. Two of the most important critiques of binarism are David Rodowick, *The Difficulty of Difference: Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference, and Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and Mandy Merck, "Difference and Its Discontents," *Screen* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 2-9.
4. For an overview of queer theory see Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
5. I explore the importance of queer theory for feminism at greater length in "Feminist Heterosexuality and Its Politically Incorrect Pleasures," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (Winter 1995): 382-410.
6. The basic texts are Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
7. Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema Inspired by DUEL IN THE SUN," *Framework* 15/16/17 (Summer 1981): 12- 15.
8. Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade" (1929), in *Formations of Fantasy*, eds. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London and New York: Methuen, 1986).
9. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
10. For the basic paradigm see Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," in *Notes on Women's Cinema*, ed. Claire Johnston (London: British Film Institute, 1975), rpt. in *Sexual Stratagems*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press).

Blacks in Britain: racial discourse in UK politics and media

by Susan Hayward

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Before embarking on this analysis, I wish to lay down one or two disclaimers. First, this paper is more of an attempt to pull together analytically into one text important discourses already articulated by other researchers and academics. Therefore, this work does not constitute original research *per se* but rather is very much inflected by research conducted both by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University since the 1970s and by Therese Daniels, who is currently a researcher at the BFI. Second, the approach in this paper is a political-cultural one rather than one of textual analysis, so that television programs will be referred to only by way of illustrations of points made.

Focusing on shifts in political and cultural definitions of racism and Blackness over the past four decades, I also examine the representations of Black people on British TV from the 1950s to the 1990s, including resistances to a White-ordered representation. By examining the interface between political and media discourses around race, this paper will establish the evolution of the political agenda as it concerns race — which has gone from integration via social control to present state racism — and show how this is manifested on TV. By way of a precision: the use of the term Black will most times refer to Afro-Caribbean Blacks and also to Asians — a term readily recognized by both cultural groups in England. At times it will be necessary to be more specific and at those moments distinctions will be made.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS, LEGISLATIVE MEASURES, POLITICAL CULTURAL AND MEDIA DISCOURSES AROUND RACE/RACISM

In the beginning there was the Empire and, then (post-1945), there was the Empire no more. In a nostalgic bid to keep the idea of Empire alive, the British establishment first created the Commonwealth and, in 1948, voted through Parliament the Commonwealth Act whereby all citizens of the ex-Empire could come to the mother country: the United Kingdom. Indeed, during the 1950s there were several waves of immigration into the UK — mostly at the behest of the British government in a need to make up its shortfall in man- and womanpower primarily in the health and transport areas. This amounted to an annual "high" of 30,000 in the mid-1950s (Anwar, 1986, 8). The intention at this time on behalf of

both government and immigrants was that entry would not be permanent and that the stay would be measured in years.

Concern as to the number of "coloured" immigrants (as they were then known) was being voiced in the mid- to late 1950s by the Conservative party (which had been in power since 1951), but race as an issue did not fully become one until the watershed year of 1958. Two occurrences: the so-called Nottingham "riots" and Nottingham "riots" (the former in the north-eastern part of England, the latter in a London borough) put race on the social and political agenda. Thanks to these events, race would henceforth be perceived as a problem. However, it is the key term "riots" which must be examined here. While these events made race an issue, they simultaneously showed how political and media discourses mobilized a first myth in the making — thereby staking out what would become their permanent function as a mythmaking machine in matters related to race. What occurred was not a riot but series of attacks by White youths (fascists and Teddy boys) on Black youth. In fact, a Black youth, Kelso Cochrane was murdered at Nottingham. The White youth called these attacks "nigger hunts"-attacks which the police notoriously did little to interfere with. Indeed, Kelso Cochrane's family are still protesting the police's failure to apprehend their son's murderers. Media coverage did not point to the fact that these hunts were anti-black attacks but claimed that the Blacks were themselves to blame. By the very dint of "being there," Blacks were trouble-causers. They were the "other," the Black intruding menace.

Historically what is important in terms of these discourses around race/racism is that henceforth any Black protest is invariably labeled negatively as "riots, disturbances, unruly mob violence"; and since the early 1980s protest has been called "orgies of arson, rampaging Blacks, black tide of looters." Implicit within these discourses is the notion that Blacks remain invisible until and unless they are perceived as a problem. In other words what is occurring is a normalizing effect through these discourses around Black protest whereby it becomes something quite other. There is a dissolving effect at the interface of political and media discourses which points to innate Black lawlessness. Blacks are stereotyped and rendered visible only as "rioters, looters, muggers, scroungers on the welfare state, illegal immigrants." This stereotyping also places Blacks outside history and bleaches out their historical contribution to Britain (such as fighting in the two World Wars). And it is interesting to note that in contemporary political and media discourses there is no reference to Britain's colonialist and imperialist past as a way of "explaining" Black presence within the UK.

Implicitly then since the late 1950s political and media discourses have been articulating an acceptance of an idea that as the Black population in the UK has grown over the past four decades, "violence and disorder" have become the order of the day. Blacks have no history. Traces of Black life have been removed from the British past to ensure that Blacks are not part of Britain's future. Blacks are the "alien disease" for whom there is only one "common sense" solution: Repatriation. As a signifier of the increase in this common-sense racism, one only has to look at the seven different Acts on immigration (and to the shift in the signifying chain of key words) which have been voted by Parliament since that watershed moment in 1958:

- 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act

1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act

- 1971 Immigration Act
- 1981 Immigration Act
- 1981 Nationality Act
- 1985 New Visa System

It would be fair to say that these Acts came mostly in response to predominantly rightwing, but certainly popular, press discourses around Blacks in Britain. The irony is, of course, that while the impact of the first 1962 Immigrants Act was to create an anomalous figure in the number of Black immigrants coming to the UK (in a rush to beat the passing of the Act into law), since that time these legislative measures increasingly address a smaller number of demands. By mid-1980s, less than half of immigrants to the UK were from Commonwealth countries and Pakistan (Anwar, *ibid.*, 9).[1][[open bibliography and notes in new window](#)]

Common-sense racism does not, however, construct its ideology around facts. Here are the actual figures and facts. First, 5% of the total population is of "ethnic" minority. Of these 50% are British-born, and of course this is a percentage which is rising as the earlier generations of immigrants with British and Commonwealth passports die out. Second, more people leave the UK than seek immigration. Third, until the 1980s there was a sex imbalance of more Black men than women. During the 1980s that imbalance became redressed but clearly that was a statistic which fed usefully into the myth of the predatory and potent Black, especially Afro-Caribbean, male. Finally, in terms of the population ratio of Blacks, Asians outnumber Afro-Caribbeans by 2:1.

THE "COMMON-SENSE" AGENDA:

RACIST COMMON SENSE AND THE POLITICAL AGENDA

The common-sense agenda is made up mostly of open discourses which serve to normalize racism. It is articulated around two key terms: unemployment and immigration. Indeed, immigration is often closely allied in political discourses to unemployment. By the mid-1980s the notion of specifically Black immigration as a threat to the UK was being exploited by the TV and print media. This racist agenda particularly targeted Tamil Asians (who, in 1985 were seeking political asylum) and Asian brides. With regard to the latter category, the myth being perpetrated was that the Asian tradition of pre-arranged marriages meant that Asian men could obtain British nationality and enter the UK. In fact, this is not the case, marriage only entitles husbands to limited rights of residence, and since the 1985 New Visa System, even these rights are diminishing. The essential point that needs to be made here is that the media's assertion — that there were people attempting to enter the UK illegitimately — made it all the more imperative that the government should be seen to be doing something to "stem the tide" which could only increase Britain's unemployment problem.

Media exploitation of these issues was, in the final analysis, most helpful to the government in introducing its New Visa System whereby immigration officials refuse entry into the UK to potential immigrants before they can even leave their own country. Although on the surface this New Visa System was ostensibly an attempt to solve an immigration issue, it had a double hidden agenda. In the first instance, it would put a stop to meddlesome MPs interceding on behalf of a claimant already in the UK — because the claimant would be denied entry at

source. In the second, it made the government popular with particular repressive regimes where the UK had "interests."

The linking of unemployment with immigration and the heritage of political discourses strongly advocating stopping immigration and repatriation go back to 1968 and to the MP Enoch Powell's infamous speech, which the media retitled *The Rivers of Blood* speech. In his speech, referring to the immigration issue, Powell declared:

"Like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with blood."

Powell, who as Health minister in the 1950s had actively sought to recruit immigrants into the Health Service, was now seeking to reverse the tide. Powell's inflammatory speech made several things possible. First, through the use of certain key terms which punctuated his speech — "rivers, flood-tide, funereal pyre" — it became possible to talk about "threats to society" in a particular way and to distance the source of the real problem, economic recession, by having a visible target: Blacks. Second, his speech made it "normal" to talk of immigration as a menace.

Powell, like most politicians, claimed to be speaking for his electorate. However, race relations in the 1960s were not a big issue, not even in Wolverhampton, Powell's constituency at the time (Gordon & Rosenberg, 1989, 45). Powell made race relations an issue and it had a snowball effect. The press picked it up and then the government. Powell's speech, by positing that the UK was a nation under threat from outside, undisputedly helped the government's agenda on the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, whereby the automatic right of British passport holders from the ex-colonies to live in the UK was withdrawn. Third and finally, Powell's speech made racist opinion respectable and began the chain which has put in place today's common-sense racism which goes like this:

- by saying it, it becomes acceptable
- by being acceptable, it becomes true
- by being true it forms part of the racist common sense.

A reflection of this common-sense racism can be seen in the backlash effect of the intentionally anti-racist TV sitcom *Till Death Do Us Part* (BBC 1, launched 1968). This hugely successful sitcom was supposed to expose the bigotry and racism of the central character Alf Garnett (incidentally a representative of the working class). However, by airing these prejudices in the public domain, through Garnett as the mouthpiece of common-sense racism, the program did not expose them to ridicule but served to legitimate them — the audience in the quiet of its home could agree with Garnett's sentiments or, if it did not, it could turn the TV set off. Alf Garnett was the prototype for Archie Bunker in the popular US series, *All in the Family*.

The way in which the rightwing press and certain Conservative politicians respond to anti-racist discourse reveals just how pernicious this common-sense racism is. Anti-racism gets turned around to become the fanatical beliefs held by the "Loony Left, Lesbians..." Equal Opportunities they re-label Reverse Discrimination. This "black is white" syndrome is a particular effect of Thatcherism and one which continues today. As an example of the insidiousness of this syndrome (one could not call it "thinking"), I will refer to one particular incident: The *Burnage School*

Report which was the result of an official enquiry into the murder at Burnage High School in Manchester of a 13 year-old Asian pupil, Ahmed Iqbal Ullah, by a 13 year old White boy, Darren Coulbourn. Only part of the report was published. It suggested that racial tension within the school happened because the school implemented a particular model of anti-racism. This is bad enough in and of itself. The media, however, picked this up and gave the following reading: anti-racist education itself was responsible for the polarization which ended in the "death" (sic) of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah.[2] This comes unpleasantly close to stating that Whites are the victims of anti-racism.

Since the late 1960s, common-sense racism has evolved along lines which are commensurate with the political climate of the time. Thus, the late 1960s marked a sharp decline in Britain's economic security which projected the country into a state of crisis. This downturn led to a "fear of the future" mentality. At the beginning of the decade, the then Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, told the British that they had "never had it so good." By the end of it, Harold Wilson, Labour Prime Minister, was beseeching the British to declare: "I'm backing Britain." As the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS, 1982) in its important survey of the 1960s and 1970s, *The Empire Strikes Back*, makes clear:

"The sixties represent what Gramsci called a condensation of contradictions at all levels of society. This placed violence, permissiveness and later race on the agenda of popular politics. This was also the period in which the post-war consensus over the role of the state [i.e., Welfare Statism] in economic and social policies began to break down...although the sixties are sometimes represented as the high points of the 'permissive society', they are also a period which saw important changes leading to greater separation of decision-making from popular control [e.g., trade unions], and a shift towards an authoritarian response to so-called 'threats' to society..."

"The period of Wilsonism from 1964 to 1970 is perhaps the most interesting from this angle, since it is also during these years, that race became a core theme in wider political discourse. The 'Wilson experiment', with its detailed plans for transforming the economy, developing further social provisions, and bringing Britain through a new technological revolution, has always been difficult terrain for political historians of the left. It was, after all, a period which the left had welcomed as the dawn of a new era in 1964, and which ended with dismal defeat in the 1970 election. It seemed to represent the end of the road for the post-war model of social-democratic change, and yet, ironically, it confirmed the fact that the basic dilemmas which Britain faced could not be overcome by the implementation of technocratic models from the top... Wilson's [failures] introduced the notion that ours was not simply an economic problem, but a deep malaise which had taken root in the whole of society."

"The idea that 'the nation' is diseased and slowly destroying itself is not new... What was new in the sixties was that the threat came to be conceptualized as the 'enemy within'... This shift had profound

implications for the way black people were perceived..." (22-23)

This "fear of the future" mentality, then, made sense of the crisis confronting the UK by creating an "enemy within" concept whereby the country was divided into two camps: authority and its enemies. In other words, the real cause, a country in economic crisis, was displaced by a visible cause: Black criminality. This common-sense racist view, which is underpinned by popular politics' ostrich mentality that anything can be blamed for the state of crisis as long as it is not capitalism (i.e., the hegemonic foundation of the nation), has led in the last 30 years to increased criminalization of Blacks.

The 1970s was characterized by a "siege" mentality. The enemies of society were now those who openly defied authority: trade unions and also Black protestors (among other groups). In economic and political terms, Britain was all but bankrupt. There seemed no solution to the aggravated crisis. Governmental discourses on trade unions — seen as "holding the nation to ransom" — revealed a determined attempt to get rid of social democratic consensus (this would eventually happen under Thatcher). By placing itself as the one besieged, the government made it clear that protestors' voices and demands threatened the state's legitimacy. The fragmentation now became "authority versus disorder and violence." The rise in racist attacks during that decade and the impact of the U.S. Black Power Movement on Blacks in Britain led them to politicize their protest — a move which "naturally" allowed first political discourses and then media discourses after them to make race central to an understanding of the crisis. It should be noted that segregation in pubs was a common practice in certain London boroughs.

With social-democratic consensus on its way out, all that remained for the 1980s to do was to give the kiss of death to the welfare state. Again common-sense racism was useful to this political agenda. With the rise in unemployment, crime was on the ascendancy. "Fear of crime" became the new mentality of the Thatcher age — especially of small-time but violent crime such as mugging. Never before have so many security systems been installed or neighborhood-watch schemes been established in middle- to lower-middle-class suburbia. Since I shall be picking up on the issue of crime in the next section, here I am only indicating how political discourses exploited unemployment and race as a way of dismantling the welfare state. Proportionally speaking, although they will not outnumber unemployed Whites numerically, because Afro-Caribbeans and Asians are more likely than Whites to be unemployed, percentage-wise they will represent a higher figure than their actual proportion to the nation's demographic make-up (Anwar, *ibid.*, 15).[3] A distortion then occurs — which as we shall see in the next section gets carried over into discourses around crime. Blacks get represented as "scroungers" on the welfare state. It is interesting to note that the only other visible minority to be targeted in such a way by Conservative politicians and the right wing press is single mothers.

Implicit in this rhetoric is, first, "What right do these people have to state benefits?" and second, "Should the welfare state be concerning itself with the likes of these people who either 'don't belong here' or are just 'out for what they can get and are bone-idle'?" Throughout Thatcherism the welfare state has been represented as the bountiful but blind, stupidly gullible hander-out of free "meal tickets" to scroungers, who will stop at nothing to defraud the system. Given the

awesome task of providing for the nearly four million unemployed, to be rid of the welfare state would be something successive Conservative governments would devoutly wish for. The fact that the Conservatives with their market force mechanisms have created this economic rod for their own back seems to have totally escaped them. By enforcing the imperatives of a market society, Thatcherism has pauperized labor in the belief that ever-cheaper labor will produce profit and competitiveness. It does not. It swells the ranks of the unemployed so that ultimately unemployment benefits along with other social security benefits such as housing outstrip pay! By driving the market principle into the welfare system, Thatcherism has increased public spending and, commensurately, tax rates. Furthermore, by centralizing power away from local authorities and by punishing them if they overspend, inner city decay has been one of the most tangibly visible legacies of this Thatcherite era, one which will take decades to repair and one with which, unsurprisingly, Black communities are much identified in political and media discourses, as we shall see in the next section.

NOT JUST THE GOVERNMENT THAT SETS THE POLITICAL AGENDA AROUND RACE: THE ROLE OF THE POLICE AND TV

Since Powell's 1968 *Rivers of Blood* speech, which played on economic insecurity and pointed to immigration as the cause, Political discourse has increasingly criminalized Blacks. It is not just the government of the day which sets the agenda around race. Both the police (termed *Babylon* by Black slang) and the media, including TV, have had their part to play. But first, another piece of history.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Blacks became more and more active in their protest against the common-sense racism discussed in the previous section, and in so doing they increasingly clashed with the police. Numerous so-called "riots" erupted all over England — the most notorious of which were the Brixton "riots" in April 1981. I say notorious because, although not the first among the many protests nationwide, it was the one which persuaded the Thatcher government that an enquiry was necessary (some would say overdue). Lord Scarman, a leading legislator and judge, was appointed and submitted his report in that same year. In his report, he severely criticized police action, falling short of calling it racist. And in the light of the reproving tenor of that report, it is not difficult to see why, in the 1980s, Blacks were increasingly criminalized by the police and subsequently by the media. Equally revealing was the tendency of the police to associate Blacks with certain types of crime — thus feeding into the "fear of crime" mentality of the 1980s.

Looting was one crime associated with Blacks — especially the looting of one cultural group, Asians, by another, Afro-Caribbeans. Police remarked upon what they termed "Black on Black racism" which occurred in Handsworth (an area of Birmingham) during the so-called Handsworth/ Lozells "riots" of 1985. What they failed to point out is that Handsworth and the Lozells Road area are almost entirely composed of Black communities, and that most, if not all, of the shops involved in the looting (particularly on the Lozells Road) were owned by Asians. It was hardly a case of "Black on Black racism," more one of whatever store was there got damaged and looted. The effect of the focus on Blacks-as-looters by police and the media was of course one of criminalizing the protests.

The other crime associated with Blacks, mugging — implicitly of little old ladies —

is even more pernicious, particularly since the facts just do not bear out the assertion. Pernicious, too, since mugging is not actually on the statute books as a crime (Gordon & Rosenberg, op. cit., 14). Nonetheless, this did not prevent the Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner Leslie Walker, in February 1982, from claiming on TV that 80% of all muggings in London were committed by Blacks. Although, as Gordon and Rosenberg (ibid., 14) point out, the facts do not support this claim (1% of all crimes are "muggings" and the victim is usually male and aged between 21 and 30), the fact remains that during 1982 this piece of fiction set loose a series of quotations proffered by unverified sources, claimed to be anonymous police officers, saying that Black crime was rampant. The magic figure of 80% gained considerable popularity: claims of 80 muggings per week in Brixton were made by the *Evening Standard*, and unnamed police sources stated that 80% of all muggings in Brixton were by Blacks—extraordinary prowess when one considers that the Black population in Brixton at that time was a mere 36%!

This "80% factor-reaction" can be read in a number of different ways. First, it can be seen as a verbal response to Scarman's 1981 report and as a marker of police determination to undermine that report. Second, it is a way of criminalizing Black protest against racism. Finally, it's also a way of feeding into the insecurity agenda of the 1980s, pointing to crime as the factor for social unease rather than to the fact that the UK continued to languish in an economic recession now 20-years old. This particular incident also served notice that the police were on the counterattack and would increasingly frame their version of the event in a way that, as it transpires, the media, including TV, would predominantly accept. The way in which the death in 1987 of Clinton McCurbin was mediated by the police will serve as an example. McCurbin, a Black, died in Wolverhampton as a result of police strangulation when they were arresting him. The police claimed that McCurbin was asphyxiated. The main point is that the Black-as-victim scenario was completely glossed over and, instead replaced by that of the police-as-victim. McCurbin's death, the police stated on TV, was a result of inadequate policing, which in turn was a result of inadequate police training, which in turn was the result of inadequate resources from the government (and so on). And TV news completely went along with the police's reading — showing how TV reproduces the power relations between Blacks and Whites as "natural" and also how deep-rooted the acceptance of that representation within the dominant ideology is (Cottle, 1993, 91-98). Indeed, British culture has not moved on very far from its colonialist mentality.

From the early 1980s on, police have increasingly been speaking the political agenda around race. Whereas, in the late 1960s it was a politician, Powell, who made race a political issue and diagnosed Britain's social ills in the light of race (i.e., immigration), now the voice of the police has taken up running with this agenda, with the media and TV close to their heels.

STATE RACISM

At the beginning of the previous section, I discussed how, during the 1980s, the police have increasingly been speaking the political agenda around race. In section two, I showed how common-sense racism was used to sidestep, invisibilize the true cause of the UK's state of crisis. Progressively since the late 1960s, "neo-conservative ideology has shifted the cause of the crisis into the social and political sphere." (CCCS, op. cit., 183) It is also the case that in police and state discourses of

the 1980s there has been a progressive "visibilization" of urban unrest — they speak it, so it is there (as in the chain mentioned earlier, it becomes part of the commonsense agenda). The social unrest and disorder which is "rampant" in our cities, these same dominant discourses claim, is criminally motivated. This projection represents a convenient way of dodging the real issue: that society is trapped in widening inequality, so that the poorer areas have become generators of the poorly socialized, the criminal and the disaffected. Since many of these deprived areas are those inhabited by Blacks, it is not difficult to see how the common-sense racism of which I spoke earlier has now evolved into state racism. Law (the police) and order (the state) say this is so: "Social unrest (primarily caused by Black criminality — probably 80%) is the root cause of the climate of instability, uncertainty and fear in which the UK finds itself." Indeed, state racism exists at the interface of the authoritarian state ("law and order society") and common-sense racism.

This state racism is one which pathologizes Blacks and constructs them as a national problem by identifying them with the crisis confronting Britain. This leads not just ideologues of the Powell tradition, not just fascists and skinheads, but also politicians of the right to openly discuss who is and who is not British and to pass laws based on those debates as is evidenced by the 1981 Nationality Act.[4] I have already discussed in some detail one of the ways in which Blacks are pathologized: identifying non-racial phenomena with race (e.g., unemployment, inner city decay/unrest, "riots"). The other is one whereby "race problems" are comprised of Black communities in and of themselves. That is, Blacks cause their own problems. This second form of pathologizing is mostly articulated around the family. It is this particular issue of "familyism" which I now want to address in relation to the interface between political and TV discourses.

The family is, as we all know, a politically crucial site for the construction of common-sense ideologies since it is seen as "natural." *Familyism* has been a key concept of Thatcherism and post-Thatcherism (under John Major). As with all common-sense ideology, however, it is quite contradictory as a concept: it exists but is perilously in danger of not existing. This is because in Thatcherite discourse, the decline of just about everything in the UK is blamed on "our" having stripped the family of so many of its rights and duties thanks to the welfare state. We saw earlier how the welfare state was constructed in the racial political agenda as weak and vulnerable to "scroungers" — now the circle has widened to collectivize all citizens as colluders in the destruction of the family and family values. But this collectivization has not made Blacks less visible. Far from it. Asians and Afro-Caribbeans are particularly singled out for their inadequacies. Asian family culture is seen as tyrannical because of pre-arranged marriages, as barbaric because of Asian food culture (not just by virtue of their animal slaughter traditions but also their culinary traditions). Asians are seen as even more alien than the Afro-Caribbeans because they keep to their traditions. As might be expected, their religious practices are equally a target for fomenting racism. The recent Salman Rushdie Affair made that clear.[5] On the issue of familyism, TV has done very little to disperse the racist perception of Asian family culture's "tyrannizing" females. Documentaries on the subject of arranged marriages have focused on the daughter as victim of the father's will and not on the active part which she has to play in the decision — namely, that often she can refuse the chosen suitor and the father must go and look again.

Afro-Caribbean familyism comes in for a different kind of targeting from common-sense racism. Against Asians, this racism is charged with a sense of cultural superiority; however, racist judgments against Afro-Caribbeans are often more based on concepts of morality and incompetence. According to common-sense racism, West Indian families came to the UK with so-called Victorian values (something Thatcherism should have appreciated given the then Prime Minister's aspirations to Victorian values). But, because Britain is a "permissive society" (since the 1960s), permissive Britain (former Mother England, let us not forget) has undermined parental authority and thus the family can't cope. Unable to parent properly, the families raise children who run "riot," especially male youth. To this incompetency myth gets added a second, this time fingering the mother. The weak family structure so "endemic" to West Indian familyism arises as a "natural" consequence of its matriarchal base. This matriarchy has created instability for the male of the family so that he has no role and therefore no responsibility or identity. [6]

The Afro-Caribbean produced and scripted TV sitcom *Desmond's* is an important program to cite in the context of familyism. This sitcom reflects the notion of the family as the site for the reproduction of traditional values (respect for the parents, the work ethic, and so on). And in so doing it reproduces stereotypes around the Afro-Caribbean family. It is the mother who is the site of the reproduction of traditional values. It is she who restores order at the end of each program — by making the others see sense or come to their senses. The men (and there are quite a few, not just her children but also in the extended family) are seen as dysfunctional, as non-copers. The mother is portrayed as fair but firm, the site of traditional values, which stand as a bulwark to permissive White society and education. Afro-Caribbean womanhood doing what it knows best: keeping the family together.

BRITISH TV 1950-1990S: IMAGES AND RESISTANCES (?)

Given this framework, it is hardly surprising that Blacks on TV have very little favorable representation. For the most part, they remain invisible on TV — especially Asians. What positive Black imaging there is tends to be found in sports and entertainment — both of which point "naturally" to Blacks, Afro-Caribbean Blacks primarily, as having an instinctive athleticism and rhythm. But Blacks have to pay a price for this sort of "equality"/visibility.[7] Effectively in both instances, Black-as-entertainer/Black-as-athlete, Blacks are marginalized and decontextualized. They are the exceptions and they are outside of history — especially their own.[8]

Based on Therese Daniels' as yet unpublished research into the TV archives,[9] a synoptic view of what's been on the small screen since the 1950s will show that there has been little change in the representation of Blacks — rarely for the better, at least until the last fifteen years where there has been a mixture of progress and racist regression. It is only now with deregulation and the new technology of cable and satellite that there may well be a definitive change because of audience targeting.

In her research, Daniels makes the following points. During the 1950s, with the exception of one or two specific documentaries on race issues in the UK — the first

full length documentary made on race relations in Britain was in 1955 (in the *Special Enquiries* series: '*Has Britain A Colour Bar?*') — what dominated amongst the very few programs made at all concerning Black immigrants were either magazine-type ones or travelogues. As the following titles make clear — *Commonwealth Magazine*, *Meet Us In London*, *Children Of Other Lands*, *Asian Club* — Black immigrants were seen in terms of where they came from, i.e., as citizens of the ex-Empire. So these programs functioned mainly to keep in place the notion of Commonwealth so vital to the Establishment post-decolonization.

However, it was the 1958 "riots" which brought race onto the TV agenda in a strategically different way. Race was now presented as a problem in the UK rather than as an end-of-Empire debate as it had been previously. TV programs of the 1960s and 1970s now characterized Blacks as immigrants, all the same, and the cause of overcrowding and unsanitary house conditions. Two BBC I sitcoms, the already mentioned *Till Death Do Us Part* and *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* (launched 1975), should be singled out as representative of this common-sense racist discourse. In the first, Alf Garnett belches out his everyday racism to all within earshot, mostly his family; he displays a bigotry which the audience is supposed to find funny. In the second, we are back in the good old colonialist past-in India to be precise (though where exactly is not clear) with an army unit in 1945. The army unit is White, the servants, or *punkawallahs* as they are called, are Indian (or in some cases browned-up Whites). The source of laughter for the audience is the Indian's "funny" way of talking English. TV's agency here as a mediator of colonialist attitudes does not need spelling out.

There were a few isolated attempts to counter these images. Daniels cites three: *Man from the Sun* (1956) which concerned the problems of settlement in the UK; *Hot Summer Night* (1959) which addressed White fears of mixed marriages (and of course the fear of the Black male phallus and White female fascination with same); *The Colony* (1964) which was a documentary which let Blacks speak for themselves (a bit in the vein of Lindsay Anderson's Free Cinema documentaries of the 1950s). I would add the liberal-minded sitcom, *Love Thy Neighbour* (launched 1972, ITV) which addressed racial prejudice albeit within a very localized situation between two neighbors of different race: one Black couple and one White. Elsewhere, as in the 1960s police series *Z Cars*, racism was referred to but Blacks were really only ciphers. And even the few resistances which were put forward by TV programs of that period were written and produced by Whites.

Not until the 1980s would there be any significant change on this front. Since the various protests of 1981, possibly in response to them, TV has made attempts to give more positive images of Blacks and to counter the negative image the police were producing, particularly of Black youth. First of all, certain primetime programs (particularly soaps and series) although predominantly produced by Whites began to include Black storylines within their existing narratives. Secondly, studios began to open their doors to Black producers and practitioners, thanks mostly to the impact of the newly launched Channel Four in 1982 and its specific remit to provide airtime for cultural minorities. I want now to look at these two new developments in turn.

As far as primetime programs are concerned, a very good set of essays on Black images on British TV was published in 1989: *The Colour Black*, edited by Therese

Daniels and Jane Gerson. I do not intend to reduplicate this important study but wish rather to turn my attention briefly to two TV programs which began in the early to mid-1980s and which are still ongoing: the police series *The Bill* (ITV) and the soap opera *Brookside* (Channel Four). It is precisely their long-lasting nature that makes them interesting to discuss; in some way they act as barometers of change. These are White-produced programs, and as we shall see they are not without their problems. *The Bill* is an equal opportunities dream ticket, although as yet there is still to be an identifiable gay or lesbian. It is set in a fictitious inner city working-class district of London, Sunhill, where drugs, petty crime, wife and child abuse, prostitution get dealt with by the representatives of law and order (the Bill). The series is mostly shot in Wandsworth (a fact not without its ironies given that that borough is Mrs. Thatcher's golden child, the bastion of Conservative correctness). Women are well represented in this series, and the issue of sexism within the police force is realistically portrayed. From the beginning of the series in mid-1980s, an Afro-Caribbean male and an Asian female have been on the staff of the uniformed police ranks. In the early 1990s, in the plainclothes force, an Afro-Caribbean female Detective Inspector was introduced. At first when she joined the series, she was portrayed as ambitious but fair. She quickly commanded respect from her female officers; the men took a bit longer to come round. However, this image gradually started to become less positive. As ambition turned to driving ambition, she started taking risks with her staff on drug raids and the like. She was obliged to move on to another police headquarters and so, effectively, has left the series. So far, not too good.

Brookside, set in suburban Liverpool, is also mindful to represent pluri- and multiculturalism. During the 1980s, it had gay young men confronting the difficulties in coming out to their parents. By the 1990s, they had disappeared to be replaced by, arguably, less controversial images of lesbians kissing on screen in prime time (8 p.m.). In the late-1980s a middle-class Chinese couple came to live in this lower- to middle-class housing estate, thus representing the significant proportion of Chinese living in Liverpool. And, in the 1990s, an Afro-Caribbean couple took up residence. The latter couple are partners, not married. She is a middle-line professional woman with good career prospects. Her partner has a young son who is none too keen on this "new" woman in his father's life; when she gets a promotion which would mean her having to leave and work in London, the child sees this job change as a dream come true. He also has a child-minder who looks after him while the couple are at work and whom he is at great pains to encourage in her ostensible attraction to his father. After much deliberation over the job offer and acutely aware of the possible "threat" the "other woman" represents to her relationship, the wife decides to stay put. Realistic but undermining of progressive images, so not so good either.

I want now to raise what I perceive as four essential problems in these doubtlessly well-intentioned programs' "political correctness." First, given today's construction of the ideological function of the inner city as a site of racial conflict, tension, violence (a construct put in place, incidentally, as a reaction to the numerous incidents of protest and violence in the early to mid-1980s), series like *The Bill* do little to challenge that construct. Thus, the inner city as an unsafe place for the middle class to go and a place for the underclass to be kept in remains unquestioned. Second, Blacks in these two programs are mostly represented as if fully integrated into British culture. If they are not, as for example with Blacks who

are represented as perpetrators or victims of crime, then *they* are the problem. However, as fully integrated, they still have problems because they are represented as having no community culture of their own. So we are back to the issue of visibility and the bleaching out of history, which I discussed earlier. Finally, these programs make it very clear how enormously difficult it still is for Black actors to get on TV. Because so few actually "make it," the ones who do tend to be recycled into other programs; thus the same Black actor may appear in three totally distinct programs in one week. Such overexposure cuts away an actor's credibility and authenticity, and inexorably it devalues her or him.

The second development I want now to discuss is the entry, post-1981, of Black producers and practitioners into TV studios. Curiously it would be during the ideologically most severe postwar conservatism under Thatcher that liberalism would open TV doors to Blacks. This is not all due to market forces' "benign" effects. The heritage goes back, first, to the 1960s and, second, to Blacks' political mobilization and militancy during the late 1970s. Black independent film production dates back to the 1960s but has remained largely unrecognized by the dominant culture. By the late 1970s, however, film/video collectives and workshops started to spring up all over Britain.[10] By the early 1980s when TV in response to the 1981 protests ("riots") opened up spaces for Blacks — mostly on Channel 4 with its specific remit to give air-space to cultural minorities — there were Black professionals to step inside. At last, Black independent production was receiving institutional support.

In the 1980s, the intention was to make pluri-culturally inflected programs. However, the programs produced by Black practitioners had their own set of problems. These were mostly magazine-type or sitcoms, cheap to make and not requiring the huge time and money investment which soap operas do. Thus, in the 1980s, there were three sitcoms and several magazine programs. However, these types of programs had limited "watchability," which in turn made them open to criticism. And this led to political problems. Magazine programs, made by and for Blacks, could be in danger of becoming ghetto-shows and feeding into the Black-as-victim mentality; the sitcom's main problem lies in the generic nature of this type of program to play off stereotypes. The products of the 1980s did indeed encounter these problems. Even the title of some of the magazines, *Black on Black* and *Eastern Eye*, despite their parodic intent, signaled this danger of ghettoization. *Eastern Eye* connotes the idea of the Third vigilant eye of India. *Black on Black* indicates not only that Blacks are going to speak about Blacks but also deliberately parodies the police who talk about "Black on Black racism." This latter reading is certainly the Black producers' way of "grinning" in collusion with the Black spectators at the expense of White viewers, which is a very positive strategy if a Blacks-only audience is being targeted. However, introspection and being in-the-know also produce marginalization; they do not seem, in the final analysis, to guarantee pluri-culturalism. Black TV critics at the time criticized these magazines for exploiting difficulties experienced by Blacks and for making programs where the appearance of the program was more important than the content (this was the Black television journalist, Marc Wadsworth's criticism, 1986, 39-40).

As for the sitcoms of the 1980s, Black producers also wanted to achieve pluri-culturalism with their programs. Asian producers made the sitcom *Tandoori Nights* — again the title is deliberately parodic, intending to evoke the aromas of

Indian cuisine and the exotic nature of the East. This sitcom gave a slice-of-life view of Asians living in some (vaguely indeterminate) city/suburb and portrayed the life and times of numerous relations (uncles, cousins, grandmother) mostly living under the same roof. The Afro-Caribbeans, for their part, found their family life represented, through a variety of comic situations, in *Fosters*.^[11] The basic criticism, and one which was bound to be leveled against these sitcoms, was that neither one nor the other managed to achieve a representation of the pluralistic or cultural depth within these different ethnic groupings. The point is of course that all sitcoms rely on family conflict, misunderstandings and stereotypes for their comedy—so why should Black sitcoms be an exception? Problematically the producers were reproducing stereotypes which Whites already attach to Blacks. So the question of these programs' watchability, as with the magazines, came down to the type of images of Blackness they enunciated (stereotype, marginal, victim, and so on). Indeed, it is not even clear if Blacks actually watched these programs. What did become clear during the 1980s was that Black practitioners no longer wanted to make specifically Black products and chose to be absorbed into more mainstream TV or to turn to filmmaking. This is possibly one of the reasons why in the 1990, there is only one surviving sitcom, the afore-mentioned *Desmond's*.

It should also be added that although by the 1980s Black practitioners were finally getting institutional support, not all their programs got a fair screening. I'll cite just one example because of its fairly clear signals of censorship — and note that this practice is common for many productions which are "controversial." It concerns the documentary film made by CEDDO (a Black film and video workshop), *A People's Account*, made in 1985 but never screened. This documentary was filmed in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham during the 1985 disturbances/protests and gave the Black point of view. Implicitly, too, the film offered a critical analysis of media coverage of those protests. The camera was not positioned on the side of the police (as with the mainstream coverage — thus positioning Blacks as a menace) but from the point of view of the people facing the police. It used numerous interviews with those persons concerned in the protests, including militants and "ordinary" people. Three times its schedule for transmission was changed. It never came on-screen.

The 1980s were a watershed for Black presence in TV. However, as the 1990s reveal, this advantage has not been pressed home. There seem to be two major causes for this beyond the one mentioned above. First, when the government's latest round of deregulation measures hit private sector TV, Channel 4 became disassociated from the ITV Channels and had to become self-financing. Its programming had to be structured and filled in such a way as to attract optimum audiences. It now cannot afford to go below a 10% audience and will need to aim higher if it is to survive well. Thus Channel 4 has had to become more generalist as a TV channel, so that it has lost some of its earlier mandate to favor the voices of cultural minorities. And it has found it increasingly difficult to give prime time to minority-focus programs (something it may rethink once audience targeting becomes vital in the post-cable and satellite era). The multiculturalism which played such a role in the Channel 4 of the 1980s has diminished greatly.

The other factor feeding into this loss of advantage comes down to the products which Black practitioners themselves are currently producing for TV. Here I am providing a synopsis of what Jim Pines, an African American expatriate and

freelance writer, has said about the present scenario in which he sees scripts as reinforcing the victim syndrome.[12] Pines says that Black-produced works tend to look at problem issues in a masochistic way and to present a barrage of images which are negative. The Black practitioners' attitude has become one which unresistingly accepts that multiculturalism is out. These practitioners sense that the agenda of the day must be something controversial but also something which sells. So what do we see on TV, asks Pines? A glamorizing of Black "self-destructiveness" and "suffering" on the one hand (victims of White racism, drugs, inner city deprivation, just like "our brothers" in New Jack City, e.g., *Baadaas TV*, Channel 4) or on the other hand, a glamorization of Black sexuality (e.g., *Doing It with You Is Taboo*, Channel 4). As Pines says, nothing is private in Black space, which is a high price for getting onto TV.

Alternatively, it could be proposed that the watershed euphoria of the 1980s was bound to be short-lived. It should also be added, as Daniels & Gerson (op. cit.) point out, that a number of sitcoms and crime series made by Blacks were already problematic in their ciphering or creating new sets of stereotypes around Blacks. Maybe the victim syndrome must be worked through unabashedly so that space will be cleared for new voices: those of the new generation of Blacks who do not accept their marginalization or those of Black students who increasingly are getting into TV & Media Studies courses and into the London International Film School. The heritage of the 1980s does have descendants, as seen especially in the Channel 4 produced film *Bhaji on the Beach*, made by the Asian woman filmmaker Gurinder Chadha (1993), and the new Asian TV magazine, *East* (BBC2), which looks at events occurring in contemporary India and Pakistan.

Although greater, more complex representation will be slow to get on the small screen, it will get there. Once there, the history of Blacks will no longer be bleached out; the invisibilization of Blacks except as problems will no longer be acceptable. The Empire, once and for all, will have expired.

NOTES

1. Anwar (1986, 8-9) quotes the figures as follows: 1961-62 =>98,000 (as opposed to a steady annual rate of 30,000); 1984 =>51,000 total of which 24,000 were Commonwealth or Pakistan immigrants.

2. For further details on this incident and other examples of backlash against anti-racism, read Gordon & Rosenberg, 1989, 39-50.

3. 1993 figures on unemployment are as follows: all 'ethnic' groups 10%; 30% of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population is unemployed; 28% of the Afro-Caribbean population; 15% of the Indian population; 10% of the White population. (source: Social Trends, Central Statistics Office, 1993, 63.

4. Note how in France since the Right got back in power in 1993, they too have voted a Nationality Act. Note also how in a 1993 local election contest between the British National Party and the Liberal Democrats in the Tower Hamlets district of London, both parties' campaign was run along racist lines. The BNP won the seat (only to lose it in the most recent local elections), and the local Lib-Dems were severely reprimanded by their party for their scurrilous tactics of playing on the "insecurity = racial problems" ticket.

5. See Cottle (1993, 106-116) for a case study of this affair as it was represented on TV.
6. What is deliberately ignored in all of this mumbo-jumbo is how the West Indian mother came to have matriarchy thrust upon her. Until very recently the culture around sex and reproduction in the West Indies was extremely macho. A result, incidentally, of white colonialist rule. After the white British colonialist had had his "droits de seigneur" over a particular slave girl, she was then given over to the male slaves. The notion of responsibility could hardly have been bred there. Upon independence, that culture could not change overnight, and men still felt entitled to sow their oats wherever they so felt inclined. Thus the young woman was predominantly left alone and pregnant, and it is from this condition that her enforced matriarchy was born: to protect the child. The "naturalness" of Afro-Caribbean matriarchy then is largely a myth.
7. The Afro-Caribbean newscaster Trevor MacDonald (ITN) was recently accused of Uncle-Tomism (an accusation he fiercely contested in a TV interview). This accusation was put to him by a white journalist claiming to quote Black opinion. It is a fairly insidious way of undermining MacDonald's standing, professionalism, and of course any sense of equality.
8. For a Black woman viewer's reception of these programs, read Angela Barry's stimulating analysis of TV's ideological function in the representation of Blacks on TV (In: Twitchin, 1992).
9. Therese Daniels presented these findings at an all-day conference — Adjusting the Picture: Black People on British Television, 1950-1990s — hosted by the Birmingham Film Festival in September 1993.
10. Just to name the three most successful groups: Sanfoka Film and Video Collective, Black Audio Film Collective with its award winning *Handsworth Songs* (1985), CEDDO Film and Video Workshop.
11. The actors playing the parents of that family are the same as those playing Desmond and Shirley in *Desmond's*.
12. Jim Pines also spoke at the all-day Birmingham conference mentioned previously. See also his article on Black independent cinema (In: Cham & Andrade-Watkins, 1988).

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The Lover. Indochine Returning to Indochina

by Sylvie Blum

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"For general Western spectatorship, Vietnam does not exist outside of the war. And she no longer exists since the war has ended, except as a name, an exemplary model of revolution, or a nostalgic cult object for those who, while admiring unconditionally the revolution, do not seem to take any genuine, sustained interest in the troubled reality of Vietnam in her social and cultural autonomy. The more Vietnam is mystified, the more invisible she becomes."

(Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, 100)

In 1992, Vietnam became the locus of three major French films, with the release of Jean-Jacques Annaud's *THE LOVER*, Régis Wargnier's *INDOCHINE* released in 1991 and Pierre Schoendoerffer's *DIEN BIEN PHU*. French scriptwriters, filmmakers and production houses have negotiated a return to France's colonial past, involving unprecedented collaboration with Vietnamese authorities and film crews. Vietnam has opened its borders to western trade, and despite the U.S. economic embargo, which finally ended in 1994, the French nation has been among the first to resume trade. President Mitterrand officially visited Vietnam in February 1993. Tourism in Vietnam is on the rise, and the newly created "Maison de L'Indochine" in Paris offers travel brochures and tours to "mysterious Indochina."

This article interrogates the recent post-colonial filmic representation(s) of the French colonial past in Indochina. I am interested in a historical moment, the 80s and early 90s, in which the films' setting returns to a colonial time neglected or absent from previous French commercial pictures. In the Anglophone film world, critics have similarly observed a "wave of elegiac narratives about the closing of the imperial period." (Shohat/Stam, 123). Several factors have to be taken into account when dealing with a postcolonial situation. In order to address these issues, I will confine my analysis to a close reading of two films *THE LOVER* and *INDOCHINE* but discuss them first in the context of other fiction films stemming from other French colonial experiences located in Africa such as Claire Denis' *CHOCOLAT* (1988).

The attempt to theorize about filmic representations of colonial Indochina cannot

constitute the object of study as a homogeneous entity. The analysis, and the films, encompass several discourses and compel us to reconsider the history of "orientalisms," or the European fascination with and appropriation of the Orient. In *Critical Terrains*, Lisa Lowe investigates the different aspects of French and British oriental discourses in literature from the 18th century on. Distinguishing differences between the French and British situations, she argues that French orientalism has a long tradition in literature which preceded some of its manifestations in French colonialism but that "colonialism is often not named or addressed" in such texts (107).

A serious representation of colonial conflicts in Indochina is seriously lacking in the narratives under scrutiny. Instead of exposing the fabric of colonialism, the stories of *INDOCHINE* and *THE LOVER* instill feelings of intense nostalgia and exoticism for something which eludes the spectator. At the same time these recent films do expose directly the colonial situation from the position of the colonialist. Such a figure is depicted by Albert Memmi in his analysis of the colonial situation as the "the colonizer who agrees to be a colonizer...[H]e agrees to legitimize colonization" (45). The films espouse the discourse of colonialism and refuse to condemn it as such. Through their nostalgic rhetoric, the screenplays are infused with colonial mores, justifying the presence of French settlers and their superiority.

Forty years after the fact, Indochina still exerts an incomprehensible fascination which does not transpose very well onto the screen. The use of eroticism and sexual attraction between the races is inscribed in both films' screenplays, as well as the fascination for the Other, be it for a geographical or human landscape. The two films, *THE LOVER* and *INDOCHINE*, are situated at the historical juncture immediately preceding the end of the colonial era. Both films conclude with the physical departure of the French presence in Southeast Asia even if the realization of such a moment is not acknowledged on screen.

French historian Henri Rousso interrogates the function of memory in France after World War II. The 70s witnessed the resurgence of lost memories or what he calls the return of the repressed — a process which started during the 70s and culminated in 1974 (19). This cycle is still present today. Instances include the Klaus Barbie trial and the affair Touvier (and more recently Papon), one involving a Nazi war criminal, the other a French collaborator, both responsible for the deportation of French Jews to Germany during World War II. More recently the French press has excavated Mitterrand's troubled background during Vichy times. Such events show evidence of the continuing necessity to purge the past.

Colonial history enters the chiaroscuro zone of France's repressed histories. Few films in France have addressed colonization from an objective historical perspective, indicating the impossibility of dealing effectively with this specific past. French cinema counts very few mainstream/commercial texts, films or novels, which deal with the war or colonial experience in North Africa, Indochina, and West Africa.[1][[open notes in new window](#)] The "return to reality" — a trend labeled by film historian Roy Armes in his attempt to periodicize French cinema for the years 1969 to 1974 — seems to be clearly restricted to depicting life within France (207). Examples of more politicized films are to be found in independent productions, either fictional or documentary, such as *AVOIR 20 ANS DANS LES AURES* (1972, René Vautier)-films which were not widely distributed. *LOIN DU*

VIETNAM (FAR FROM VIETNAM), a collective film made by Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Claude Lelouch, Joris Ivens, William Klein, and Agnes Varda might be the exception to this rule, as it exposes "the problems of the war in Vietnam seen from Europe" (Armes, 45). The film combines documentary and fictional footage and is a product of a 1968 collective organizing spirit. Godard's LETTER TO JANE touches on Vietnam as it analyzes for 45 minutes a photograph of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. Alain Resnais' MURIEL (1964) and Agnes Varda's CLEO FROM 5 TO 7 also refers obliquely to Vietnam.

It has taken about 40 years for French mainstream cinema to engage the topic of decolonization and to treat colonization in a non-oblique fashion. On the other hand, independent militant cinema in France has exposed the situation of colonization and post-colonization in Algeria, Africa and Indochina — mostly in documentary forms. Francophone African and Arab filmmakers early on targeted the history of colonialism and its products in postcolonial Africa and North Africa. In fact, many film projects were never produced because of their reflection on postcolonialism and colonialism, since the filmmakers depend on French capital in order to produce their films.

With the expansion of productions by Francophone African filmmakers, Maghrebian filmmakers, and now Franco-Vietnamese filmmakers, such as Tran Anh Hung, director of THE SCENT OF GREEN PAPAYA (1993), the production of postcolonial fictions is on the rise. As far as the treatment of colonial conflicts in Southeast Asia on film is concerned, Pierre Schoendoerffer remains the precursor (LE CRABE-TAMBOUR (1977), LA 317E SECTION (1965), SECTION ANDERSON (1967). DIEN BIEN PHU, released in 1992, is the only film to depict the 1954 battle where the French army was defeated, and the Vietnamese government and filmmakers collaborated on the making of the film.[2]

The cinematic treatment of colonialism started in the late seventies, a period of historical introspection for France, with films such as LA VICTOIRE EN CHANTANT, later renamed NOIRS ET BLANCS EN COULEURS (BLACK AND WHITE IN COLOR), a J. J. Annaud film (1976, co-produced by France-Côte d'Ivoire; Best Foreign Film Oscar, 1977) where white settlers in Africa are seen through the mercilessly objective lens of the camera, and COUP DE TORCHON (1981, Tavernier). In France, as part of the new generation's attempt to deal with the past, several recent films have been made by French women filmmakers who attempt to cast a critical look on the colonial era. One of these is Claire Denis, who grew up in Cameroon. Her film CHOCOLAT (1988) exemplifies a good attempt to come to terms with the end of the colonial world. As Stuart Hall suggested,

"CHOCOLAT...may be the only kind of film European film-makers should be making about Africa just now. It may be time for Europeans to confront what colonization has done to them rather than instantly taking on the white man's burden, once again, of speaking for the other." (51)

CHOCOLAT is a story of a return to one's native land, seen from the ex-colonizer's perspective. The white narrator, a young French woman named France travels back to Cameroon where she grew up. Claire Denis, the cineaste, grew up in colonial Africa and was inspired by her own experience when making the film as well as by Ferdinand Oyono's novel *Une Vie de boy* (Houseboy, Paris: Julliard, 1956). In a

series of major flashbacks, the film reconstitutes a moment in her childhood and her parents' life in a time immediately preceding independence. Although never evoked and always off-camera, nationalist struggles for independence are foregrounded by several elements throughout the film. France returns to see her old house, which she never does see again. Nor does she see her childhood servant ("boy") Protée, with whom she had a very close but conflictual relationship as a child. Instead as a hitchhiker, she meets an African American expatriate who tells her his own trajectory and his quest for his identity and roots. The camera visually explores the luxuriant landscape as the film's present-tense journey becomes a pretext for rediscovering the past.

Some critics have expressed their dissatisfaction with the narrative where nothing happens and where the lack of closure leaves the spectator with a sense of frustration. The last sequence adopts France's point of view, or so we assume, as she follows Protée at a distance. Protée, her childhood companion, is seen at his workplace, an airport, his back turned to the spectator, speaking with two other African colleagues. For the frustrated spectator, an encounter between France and Protée as adults does not occur, at least on screen. France is left with her own memories, transposed into long flashbacks.

Following the format of *CHOCOLAT*, *THE LOVER* and *INDOCHINE* pick two French women born in the colonies as their main protagonists. Both films rely on fictional dramas that seem to be inspired by a childhood in Vietnam during the colonial times, and so they borrow from the tradition of popular melodramas or what Ann Kaplan sees as a "maternal melodrama" (125). The plots are set during the 1930s, a moment at the height of the "colonial era." *THE LOVER*, adapted from Duras' 1984 best-selling novel *L'Amant*, is called a partially autobiographical narrative.

THE LOVER's narrative deals with a young French schoolgirl's affair with a wealthy Indochinese man of Chinese origins. It is set in the 1930s during the French colonial empire in Indochina. The protagonist is a 15 year-old girl, the daughter of French school teachers who left France to resettle in Indochina in order to better their social status. Now, as a widow, her mother raises three children by herself in a state of extreme poverty. The father is absent from the narrative, presumably dead. The older son acts as the surrogate father, in charge of authority and order in the family.

Having failed in a land-exploitation scheme and having been duped by the colonial administration, which gave her land by the delta, the mother falls into semi-madness. She leaves her children entirely free to do as they wish. The teenage girl has an affair with a wealthy 32 year-old Indochinese man of Chinese origins. Moving from novel to film, Annaud organizes the screenplay around this interracial relationship. He drops the melodramatic dimension which constitutes half of Duras' novel, articulated around the intense mother/ daughter relationship. Annaud also deletes the photographic images which permeate Duras' text and constitute its genesis. In a mixed fictional and autobiographical mode, Duras has written extensively about her own family ordeal in Indochina, where she was born.

Annaud, at first reticent to touch the novel, which is such a "national monument," decides to shoot the film back in Indochina, now Vietnam, in order to "recreate the atmosphere of Indochina in the 30s." A physical return to "Indochina" is in itself

an impossibility, but impossibility is intrinsic to any nostalgic scenario. A return to the past or home cannot be achieved if the place has been destroyed or changed. Indochine no longer exists, except as an imaginary, historical, colonial and linguistic concept. Both *THE LOVER* and *INDOCHINE* focus on Vietnam, a fraction of what composed the colonial contours of French Indochina. Vietnam's reality is that it has been devastated and divided by wars, internal and external, and it is just emerging economically. In terms of film production, Annaud's venture ironically parallels that of earlier French settlers, for he had to build roads and bring in the necessary infrastructure to make his film.

The film, *THE LOVER*, is faithful to a certain extent to Duras' story and text and to the special vision she has given of Indochina, a country where she was born and grew up. Duras would have liked to make the film herself, but she would have shot it in the French countryside. Duras, a filmmaker herself, recreated India, a displacement for Vietnam/ Indochina, on location in France for *INDIA SONG* with smaller means (1975). Her modernist theoretical approach to the recreation of the past on film, finding the cinematic potential to reconstruct situations anywhere, constitutes one of the many differences between Duras and Annaud as directors. In terms of the storyline, Annaud's script adds material gained from his doing research into the Chinese lover's background and family, enough to infuriate Duras and provoke her break with him. Gerard Brach, Annaud's collaborator and scriptwriter, insists that without the love scenes, the colonial nostalgia and the costumes would not have been substantial enough for a film:

"Despite colonial nostalgia, costumes and light, if the love scenes at the bachelor's apartment did not take place, there would not be any film" (53).

In her writing, Duras' native land is schematically outlined, its inhabitants acting as extras next to her characters' intense passion and suffering, which take centerstage. When one considers Duras' narrative treatment of the colonial question, the Orient figures as a mental landscape, with an indigenous population functioning as a backdrop. Duras is most interested in depicting the degenerating colonial milieu. In Annaud's filmic adaptation, the main characters — the girl, her mother and brothers, and the Chinese man — are also detached from interaction with the natives and always distant from them. But the film's style is not modernist, nor does it emphasize mental processes.

The Indochinese people are usually shown as silent domestic workers or in a crowd. As was characteristic of the colonialist mentality, any European settler in a colony became a colonizer and was above the natives. If the screenplay (and novel) insists on the extreme poverty of the settlers' family, the race and social status of these French colonials set them apart from indigenous people and struggles. The Vietnamese officials apparently liked this aspect, which showed a family of deprived colonizers, but a "dignified" Chinese man. (Annaud, *THE LOVER* press kit) Duras' distanced vision of her native land is inscribed in Annaud's film. In fact, Annaud did not reproduce on screen his astonishment at the real state of things he witnessed upon his "return" to Indochina. It was what Jane March, the actress playing the young girl, characterized as "the poorest country she had ever seen."

What went on in 1930s Indochina, besides the interracial love affair between an adolescent and a mature man? In her writing, Duras avoids the topic of nationalist

indigenous struggles for independence to concentrate on the fact that she herself braved both French and Chinese cultural taboos and had sex with a member of the Chinese ruling class, long-time colonial ruler over the Indochinese population. As in Duras' writing (e.g., *Hiroshima, mon amour*, 1960), the film examines the parameters of an exotic passion between two people from different social and racial backgrounds, but it is limited to the geography of the Cholon bachelor's bedroom. Both *THE LOVER* and *INDOCHINE* focus on the sexual interest of thirty-year old men for pubescent girls, a treatment which is also present in Duras' novel and Wagnier/Montella's subsequently published novel. This sexual scenario follows the formula already established in 18th century popular, "imperial" narratives about transracial love, where the "allegory of romantic love mystifies exploitation out of the picture" (Pratt, 97). The narrative in *THE LOVER* underlines the class difference between the young French girl and the Indochinese/ Chinese man as one of the major components of their relationship. At least, it is one Duras uses in order to justify the relationship: she is the daughter of a deprived colonizer in need of money, and he is the wealthy French-educated son of a Chinese merchant. Once this class distinction is established, both film and novel attempt to construct a political statement about the colonial system, but in the film, exploring interracial desire does not lead to reexamining colonial consciousness or an anti-colonial attitude.

INDOCHINE recounts the loss of the French colony of Indochina, but it explores this historical moment through the melodramatic story of a family. Eliane Devries, played by Catherine Deneuve, runs a successful rubber plantation during the 1930s Indochina. Unmarried, she has adopted the daughter of two of her closest Indochinese friends who perished in an airplane accident. Eliane raises her daughter, Camille, according to French traditions, and in this way she isolates the daughter from her racial and cultural heritage. The conflict will take place between them over a man, but also over the country. The daughter will run away from home in order to join the young French navy officer they both love, but in her struggle, Camille will become politically and socially aware of her country's plight. The French man will become an instrument in her political cause against the colonial regime, and he will be sacrificed by the French authorities for his involvement with Camille — seen as an act of treason. About three-quarters into the film, the child born from their brief union, Etienne, is abandoned after his father is arrested. This baby then owes his survival to Indochinese women; in an epic scene, the infant is seen being breastfed by the milk of Indochinese women. Native women enter in this one scene, where they suddenly gain access to the plot in an interesting fashion, only to be discarded immediately after serving as a useful melodramatic device.

Wagnier's film *INDOCHINE* incorporates elements of the photo novella and melodrama. This director has often used Indochina as a backdrop to his films. His most recent film *UNE FEMME FRANÇAISE* (1995) covers the fate of a French woman and her family during the various decades where France was at war with Germany or with its colonies; but it does not offer any in-depth comment about or "return" to these countries. Instead the historical drama of France, during and after World War II, is filtered and diluted through the woman protagonist's numerous liaisons and fate.[3] *INDOCHINE* also concentrates on the lives of women. It is structured as a maternal melodrama, a form which usually involves a scenario of conflict between a mother and daughter, their separation and return, and the

daughter's eventual rupture with the mother.

INDOCHINE juxtaposes several layers of stories and points of view, which add texture to an otherwise shallow narrative. But in spite of its jagged nature, the screenplay details some of the conflictual relations played out between Indochina and France, and it contains allusions to politico-historical events such as the Yen Bai mutiny in 1930. In addition, INDOCHINE is an epic vehicle for Catherine Deneuve who plays Eliane in an unlikely role for a woman in those times.

The story borrows from fairytale plots, which can be traced back to colonial stories where the natives either have "European affiliations or, renewing an older motif, are "really princes or princesses" (Pratt, 100). Camille belongs to the royal family. The film's two-fold storyline first follows Eliane, then Camille, in their love for Jean-Baptiste, a young French navy lieutenant. Eliane hides her sexual life from her daughter whom she wants to protect, although the spectator does not know from what. When Eliane's affair with the young man is terminated by her father's direct intervention (as seen in the version released in France), Etienne then becomes the love interest of her teenage daughter. The strong bond which once existed between the mother and daughter is severed by the fact that both have had sexual relations with the same man. Camille leaves Eliane to join Jean-Baptiste, who has been banished to an island.

Both female characters are larger than life. Their roles catalyze the dualistic opposition between France and Indochina. An in-depth analysis of colonialism always exposes the interdependent relation between colonizer and colonized. Their lives are intertwined and mutually dependent; without the colony, the colonizer would not exist nor would the colonized. In this film, such a relation is played out within the familial cell. Eliane, a distinct representative of the colonialists, adopts a daughter of the colony, Camille, just as France claimed to adopt under its wings the country it occupied. Eliane's role is "mère-patrie" in relation to the "peuple-enfant" or "colonized people as children," and such an image is invoked more than once. It is best depicted when Eliane decides to punish a worker at her rubber-tree plantation. After she is done, the worker who was a deserter recognizes and praises her maternal and paternal character.[4] Alongside the eroticization of the colonial "Other," a trope of infantilization is often used in colonial scripts, a characteristic which Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have recently explored.

Like Duras, the fictional character of Eliane Devries defines herself as a hybrid character, an "Asiate," someone in between, not quite French, for she was born in Indochina and never saw France. She is the equivalent of the French North African "pied-noir." A part of the ruling class along with the national Mandarins, she controls a large rubber plantation.

Eliane's maternal function, established at the beginning of the film, is essential to the plot. She raises her daughter alone, protecting Camille from her Indochinese heritage and alienating her from her ancestral culture. Race does not seem to be an essential problem. Eliane's belief is that what matters is inside the person, and this bears no relation to color. In an early scene with Camille, Eliane expounds her theory by using the mango metaphor:

"The difference between people is not the skin color, it's this!" She bites into the mango. "It's this! The flavor, the fruit. Someone who has bitten

into an apple cannot be like me. I am an 'asiate.' I am a mango."
(INDOCHINE text, 13).

Eliane also acts as surrogate father to Camille since there is no father and no husband in the household. (Eliane's own father occupies a more dominant position in the French film version.)[5] Eliane's colonial position is stronger than her sexual persona; along the lines of the maternal melodrama, Eliane subordinates her sexual desires to "protect" her daughter. At the same time that she sacrifices/represses her sexual life to spare her daughter, her very sexuality is also dominated, unbeknownst to her, by her father, who offers to pay off Jean-Baptiste, the young lover. Furthermore, all the elements of the "maternal melodrama" are present in the opening version of the mother/daughter relationship, in which they are shown as an inseparable couple. One of the most revealing scenes which pairs them as a "couple" is one where Eliane dances a tango with Camille, a scene repeated later in a less auspicious light to signal their ruptured relationship.

In this way the film invites a psychoanalytical reading, for there is a deeper but unexplored level which pertains to a classic Oedipal script. Eliane is herself motherless since her mother died while giving birth to her. She was raised by her father, a self-made land speculator. The script insists on Eliane's male qualities and her role as a strong working woman with a whip at the head of a rubber plantation, a position usually socially occupied by a man, especially in the 1930s, a time when women were just beginning to enter the workplace and unlikely to occupy managerial positions. In the film, Eliane's father, now older, is an acknowledged womanizer. He has relationships with younger Indochinese female servants, something encouraged by Eliane. While her father's sexual activity is recognized as common within the patriarchal system she helps perpetrate, Eliane's own sexual desires are suppressed by her father, who wants to spare his daughter from further humiliation. Eliane's love life has been unsuccessful. A former fiancé left her to return to France and pretended a suicide. Eliane, ignorant of this incident, has mourned her fiancé for years and taken a few lovers. In a disjunctive way the film presents her as a successful colonialist and mother but a disastrous lover, for reasons which escape any explanation, which is one of the weaknesses of the script.

Although melodramatic scripts usually foreground sacrifice and suffering as well as a loss of social status for the mother, in this film both female protagonists, mother and daughter, sacrifice something personal in order to survive. Eliane loses her daughter, her plantation and finally "her country" whereas Camille loses her mother, her son, and her lover. But Camille has the glory of sacrificing her personal life to the political cause of her country's independence. As in all melodramas,

"the mother, as a mother, represents a fullness, a presence, a wholeness and harmony which must ultimately be broken" (Doane, 289).

The severed bond between mother and daughter is not repaired, but a newly established relationship is formed at the end, a mother-son relationship and the possibility of a new immaculate birth.

In the second part of the film, Eliane becomes an invisible spectator and narrator of her daughter's political emancipation, as told to her grandson Etienne. The romantic love story beginning turns into an epic narrative about Camille, who sheds the mango theory. Through her crosscountry journey, she joins and adopts

the cause of starving Indochinese workers and peasants. She is initiated into her people's struggles, from which she had been sheltered all her life. The camera adopts Camille's powerful gaze to focus on poverty and injustice. The voice-over narration which frames the film takes place years later; the flashback structure grounds the script. Eliane recounts the story of her daughter Camille, Camille's murder of a French officer responsible for killing a family of Indochinese farmers who had "adopted" her, and her subsequent escape with Jean-Baptiste.

Parallel to a maternal melodrama turned colonial emerges a story of political and personal abnegation for the sake of one's country. Camille's political involvement leaves no room for her lover, so he, in turn, becomes the involuntary auxiliary to her quest. Camille's character becomes larger than life, and eventually it gains mythic proportions. In one instance, she is compared to an Indochinese Joan of Arc, a term which I see as deeply embedded in colonialist rhetoric. Here, the use of such an appellation can only equal and reflect the irony of classroom situations when French school teachers would teach about "our ancestors, the Gauls" to the colonized children of Indochina, West Africa and North Africa.

The film dramatizes the transitional period of old Indochina to new. Camille has to reject the assimilationist scenario proposed by her mother (France) in order for her (Vietnam) to gain independence. A total break takes place. The colonized must reject his/her parents, or what is called "mere-patrie." Memmi suggested the solution to the colonial conflict entails a total break:

"The colonial situation, ...brings on revolt ...[T]he colonized's liberation must be carried out through a recovery of self and of autonomous dignity" (128).

Following the Oedipal script, Camille must break with her mother in order to enter adulthood. But the conformist closure of a daughter turning away from her mother, "discovering her identity through marriage...and subordination to the male" (Kaplan, 133-134), is subverted by the geo-political reality of the time. With the figure of Camille representing the march toward the country's independence, the plot follows the evolution of the different moments which lead to independence. Clear references are made to various historically important moments in the nationalist struggle for independence and the ensuing French repression. Raising the love story to a nationalist one, a popular mythology arises among the people about the interracial love of Camille and Jean-Baptiste. The tale is appropriated and enacted by popular theatrical groups traveling around the country, told as an example of defiance against the French rule.

Eliane, whose role as the eternal (but never biological) mother controls the story, is eventually able to rescue and adopt the child Etienne as her son, a role she readily embraces. Camille, also arrested, spends years in the Poulo-Condor penitentiary. She converts to communism and despite obvious ideological contradictions, she is called the red princess. When briefly reunited with Eliane in one of the most climactic and surreal scenes of the film, Camille tells her mother that in order to live she had to forget the past. Camille does not have the luxury to revel in the colonial dream and land-exploiting schemes of her adoptive mother, whose ambition was to combine land and agricultural resources to the benefit of her daughter.

The maternal and paternal relationship between France and Indochina is abolished. People like Camille and her childhood friend and husband, Than, free from the conservatism of their upbringing, will presumably inject life into their country. It is inferred that Camille will take a leading role in the forthcoming independence of Vietnam. Eliane's situation as a plantation owner and French colonizer, a position she inherited and maintained all her life, is thus brought to an end by the rise of nationalist struggles. In the film version, initially a forceful mother- and father-figure to her Indochinese workers, Eliane is forced to "go back" to France, where she never set a foot. She goes into exile from the paradisiacal plantation as Camille wished her to do and returns to an imaginary France for a "better future" with her adopted grandson, who now considers her his "true mother." However, the actual return to France is left out as the film never relocates in France, but instead ends in Switzerland.

Camille accompanies the Vietnamese delegation there in July 1954 to sign the Geneva agreements, which grant independence to Vietnam but also cut the country in two. The spectator does not see Camille again but may imagine seeing her in what amounts to five seconds of a documentary style news sequence. The potential moment of reunion between Eliane and Camille, and Camille and Etienne, never takes place. Eliane decides to remain on the periphery of this potential meeting and dispatches Etienne to meet his mother. Eliane becomes the outsider, a silent spectator, sacrificing herself for her daughter's future. The film thus concludes with the end of the French colonization of Indochina, given as a final note, in the neutral zone of Switzerland.

There are some evident shortcomings in *INDOCHINE*, which cannot function as a model for a film dealing with colonization, assuming that there is one. Such a model ideally would reconcile both sides of colonial history, and speak in two voices: that of the colonized and the colonizer. So far, the films only present the perspective of the colonizer. Here the authoritative voice behind the voice-over narration belongs to Eliane. She is telling the story of her daughter and her native country. The script's attempt to merge the two sides of Indochina and France is manichean and simplistic. The vision is thoroughly nostalgic of the ties between the two countries, presented as a "maternal" love affair.

THE LOVER and *INDOCHINE* explore the colonial ties between France and Indochina under the primarily erotic and sexual components of a nubile order, leading to a surface exploration of interracial intimacy between a Chinese man and a French girl, or a Vietnamese girl and a French man. Both colonial stories' denouements show the European reabsorption of the colonizer, whereas the native reintegrates the "colonial" space assigned to him/her. The Chinese "lover" marries his Chinese bride; Camille fights for her country's right to independence. Initially respectful of linear history, *INDOCHINE* stops short at the Geneva conference and leaves out room for further development. It imposes a giant ellipsis in time past and future, such as Camille's story, and Eliane's return to France, as well as Etienne's potential adapting to France as a Eurasian child. It also refuses any representation of extensive wartime conflicts, Vichy times and the Japanese occupation, or the final defeat at Dien Bien Phu, not to mention the name of any of the political leaders on either side.

The end of colonial Indochina suggests a loss for France, amounting to

dismemberment, visually emphasized by the incision made on rubber trees, which are said to be bleeding: "Tomorrow France loses Indochina." INDOCHINE's title sequence shows Eliane in black clothes, which in the West connote mourning, surrounded by a crowd of Indochinese people dressed in white mourning attire. They are crossing a river. She is attending the funeral of her closest friends, the parents of her adoptive daughter. The film closes with Eliane, dressed in black, now the adoptive mother of her grandson, mourning the loss of her native country and resigned to the loss of her daughter. In the last sequence of INDOCHINE, the camera lingers on the landscape, which accompanied by the musical score becomes grandiose and colorful.[6]

The picturesque landscape blends two opposite views that are presented throughout INDOCHINE's narrative, emblematic of France and Indochina: one is the marine painting of the coast of Brittany and the second is the aerial (birds-eye) point of view of the bays in Vietnam, a recurrent motif. INDOCHINE's closing scene presents the spectator with the familiar shot of the Vietnam bays craftily and surreptitiously transposed into that of Swiss mountains surrounding a lake; the shot produces a feeling of disorientation. The final image reinforces the travel motif reminiscent of 1930s films, which it reenacts here, ending with the protagonist's (failed) escape on board of sea liners. In fact, both Annaud and Wargnier have carefully crafted 1930s imagery into their scenes. THE LOVER concludes on board of one of these old-time sea liners with the young heroine on her way to France.

Both films INDOCHINE and THE LOVER emerge from the French tradition of literary adaptation on screen but also of orientalist narratives. INDOCHINE resulted in the publication of a novel based on the script while THE LOVER is the adaptation of a best-selling autobiographical novel (de Montella). The use of voice over in both films reinforces their literary aspects and at times is extremely poetic. INDOCHINE sets a lyrical tone from the beginning, when Eliane evokes her own belief system in an incredible nostalgic and reactionary prose that resonates with earlier colonial formulae:

"Maybe this is what youth was about. The belief that the world is made of inseparable things: men and women, mountains and plains, humans and gods, Indochina and France."

The myth of colonialism as being eternal and the humanist inclination to blend differences permeate the ideology of colonialism. Its discourse is faithfully adopted in INDOCHINE. In a similar vein, THE LOVER closes with the voice-over narration of the now older heroine (in voice over by Jeanne Moreau) who recalls the telephone call she received years later from the older Chinese lover, when he reiterated his eternal love for her. A linguistic difference separates both films: Wargnier made his film in French and sometimes mixed in Vietnamese. But Annaud made his film in English, dubbing and subtitling it in French for the French spectator, and allowing the two versions to be distributed in France, transferring Duras' discourse into a more international language by using two English-speaking actors, Jane March and Tony Leung. This difference instills a useful and necessary distance from the French colonial past for a French spectator of THE LOVER, while at the same time it internationalizes a linguistic kind of colonization as it makes the film more "marketable" to a foreign audience.

Ultimately, the linguistic preference for English reconciles us as French-speaking spectators with the fact that French is no longer the dominant language spoken in Vietnam, where English has replaced French.

Poetic moments in film create a veil between us and the events that happened prior to the end of the colonization, and lyricality leads the spectator astray from the problematic appropriations taking place within these narratives. I discern several of these instances in *INDOCHINE*: Eliane Devries in an omniscient perspective narrates her daughter's escape and life with Jean Baptiste, almost to the point of becoming one with Camille and borrowing her gaze. Another moment is when Eliane and Guy, the police inspector, discuss the future of Indochina as belonging to the young generation of intellectuals they sent to get trained in Paris, like Than. These instances demonstrate that colonial representatives are omnipresent, even when absent from the picture, as they decide what is best for the people under their rule, even under the cover of liberalism which becomes paternalism (e.g. Eliane's telling of her daughter's story).

Does the filmic renewal of interest in Vietnam echo or precede the renewal of the diplomatic and commercial relationship between Europe, the United States and Vietnam? The emergence of the Orient as the focal point of these films serves to displace certain problems within the domestic scene, some of them being the direct legacy of colonialism. Ultimately these films tackle the vision which French people have of themselves and the divorce created by the end of the colonial era.

CHOCOLAT reflects the impotence of French people to deal with their colonial past. This remark, however, should be nuanced, for I believe that French governmental censorship has contributed largely to this collective amnesia when dealing with colonial conflicts. It is true that throughout the history of cinema, films dealing with the colonial era reflect such a lack, or if they discuss the colonial past, it is under the pretense of other narratives, such as sexual or travel plots, which are very different from the U.S. exploitation of, for instance, Vietnam on screen. But unlike Ien Ang's comment that *CHOCOLAT* serves to expose the inability of the colonizer to tackle its colonial past (21), I suggest on the contrary that *CHOCOLAT* is one of the few engaging attempts to represent on screen the position of the postcolonial world from the colonizer's position and acknowledge that there is no point of return. The final sequence in that film shows that there needs to be respect for the other's life in a now-independent Cameroon. The film leaves an open ending where we do not know what might happen next between France and Protée. The airport scene cannot objectively be read as a "failure."

The films discussed previously do not evoke the decolonization process and its aftermath. Instead they court the "past and present" harmony between France and Vietnam. *INDOCHINE*'s discourse is emphatic in its attempt to authenticate colonialism and the impact of "good" colonizers like Eliane. In contrast, by 1992 three films of epic proportions returned to Indochina, primarily to the Vietnamese countryside. Only one of them was a "war film" and confronted the military battle of Dien Bien Phu where the French forces were defeated. Schoendoerffer presents us with a sober look at the long battle where the French army was bitterly defeated. Different from the films evoked previously, *DIEN BIEN PHU* retraces the final months of the French military battle which figures as the significantly absent moment in *INDOCHINE*. For two hours, Schoendoerffer exploits in a stylized

manner, visions of shellings and the absurd butchery that war essentially is. Schoendoerffer's involvement with the past differs radically from the other filmmakers.[7] Despite his rightwing political views, this filmmaker is able objectively and lucidly to present his radical transformation as he personally witnessed the French army's defeat. However, DIEN BIEN PHU is not able to tackle presenting the Indochinese side of the war.

In 1992 and right before, there have been more films made about France's colonial past in Asia than during the 1930s, a moment of French colonial splendor par excellence. In general, France has remained closer to her former colonies in North Africa, at least in their filmic transposition.[8] But one can say that Indochina still generates and exerts an uncanny fascination for the French, more so than North Africa or West Africa especially in recent French fiction. THE LOVER and INDOCHINE elaborate on what I call the colonial maternal melodrama in order to explore the historical moment which marked the end of the colonial era. The representation of Indochina on film serves as a displacement and interlude for problems at home. At a time when France was approaching the unification of Europe in 1992, a move supported by Mitterrand but disapproved by 49% of the electorate, the image of former colonies or "empire" celebrates a moment of splendor necessary to maintain the myth of France. This myth provides a unifying gesture for the French nation and its citizens, who are increasingly concerned with the economic crisis and the influx of immigrant workers. The focalization of the gaze toward the past on what was once an empire suggests a desire to escape from problems at home. The colonial past is embraced by popular French ideology with nostalgia, oblivious of or indifferent to the indigenous struggles which marked the prewar times, struggles whose legacy is still lingering. This colonial nostalgia seems heavily directed to the young generations born in the postcolonial period, roughly after the 60s, as in a gross pedagogical attempt to educate them about the past.

NOTES

1. The French government's control over television has been analyzed in Ruth Thomas's *Broadcast and Democracy in France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976). The governmental control over film has also influenced the treatment of colonialism or its absence of such from mainstream filmmaking.
2. For a discussion of recent films made in Vietnam, see Karen Jaehne, "Cinema in Vietnam: When the Shooting stopped...And the Filming Began," *Cineaste* vol XVII. 2 (1989). 32-37. Discussions of recent Vietnamese literature is discussed in "Les cent fleurs du Vietnam," *Le Monde* Friday 22 July 1994. VII.
3. During the 1995 Sarasota French Film festival, after the premiere of *Une Femme Française*, I asked Wargnier about his personal interest with Indochina, which I see as a backdrop in most of his films. He reacted to this question by explaining how important Indochina (and the war) has been for French people. He also promised that he would not use this source in his next film.
4. "The Coolie was on his knees, the hands tied behind his back. 'You wanted to escape, you're a deserter. You forced me to beat you. But you are my child. Do you think a mother likes to beat her children?' The coolie bowed down. 'You are my father and my mother.' Christian de Montella, *Indochine*, 36-37.

5. I saw two versions of INDOCHINE. The U.S. version cut one important scene in which the father bribes the young navy lieutenant with money in exchange for leaving his daughter. Without this scene, the father does effectively appear lame.
6. A discussion of both soundtracks would be particularly enlightening to a discussion of how both films were made to seduce a western audience, but constitutes the topic of a different paper.
7. In 1993, a low-budget film was made by a French Vietnamese filmmaker in a French studio. It won an award at Cannes' film festival. L'ODEUR DE LA PAPAYE VERTE (THE SCENT OF GREEN PAPAYA) by Tran Anh Hung recreates in a suburban studio an atmosphere among Indochinese people during colonial times, just before Vietnam's independence. The film is on video in the US.
8. Genevieve Nesterenko, "L'Afrique de l'autre," *Générique des années 30*, eds. Lagny, Ropars, Sorlin (Vincennes: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1986). 127. Chirat's Catalog of films produced in the 30s reports that out of 1305 fiction films made, only 85 films were situated outside of France with 53 films in Africa mostly North Africa, and only 13 in Asia.

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History and Memory. Who's Going to Pay for These Donuts, Anyway? Visions of silence

by Robert M. Payne

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Two works of video art, Rea Tajiri's *HISTORY AND MEMORY* (1991) and Janice Tanaka's *WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THESE DONUTS, ANYWAY?* (1992), carry obvious similarities. Both are textually dense personal "essays" that critique mainstream narratives. Both are meditations by Japanese American women on the lasting effects of the 1940s internment upon their families. Specifically, both present the perspective of a *sansei* (third-generation Japanese American) upon how her *nisei* (second-generation Japanese American) parents dealt with the internment. Both are about the fallibility of history and knowledge. And both struggle to make peace with a personal past, as they document the necessity to remember a public injustice.

The two videos share another similarity: both work to blur the distinction between the "avant-garde" and the "documentary," between the experimental and the expository. It's a distinction open to investigation. For decades, film critics have noted how Walther Ruttmann's *BERLIN: SYMPHONY OF A CITY* (1927) and Dziga Vertov's *MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA* (1929), both widely regarded as documentaries, are unconventional narratives that verge on the abstract with images more closely associated with experimental cinema. Meanwhile, to cite only one example, *THE ACT OF SEEING WITH ONE'S OWN EYES* (1972) by avant-garde exemplar Stan Brakhage can be viewed as a documentary of an autopsy. The slippage between these genres partly stems from the absence of any self-evident definitions of what each means. The term "documentary" implies a privileged relation between the ontology — the "reality" — of the pro-filmic referent and the means of its representation, a relation that has been hotly contested.[1][[open notes in a new window](#)] Similarly, not only has "avant-garde" film actively avoided any defining style or paradigm, but its very identity as a practice distinct from Hollywood has sometimes been called into question.[2]

The medium of video art arrives as especially well-suited to occupy a space at the intersection of documentary and the avant-garde.[3] Video equipment's ease in portability and its reproduction of synchronous sound echo two hallmarks of cinema verité, making video a useful tool for the documentary. Meanwhile, video's ability to be operated by one individual and its low cost relative to film permit an

intimacy of vision and directness of voice most closely associated with the avant-garde. So, it's no surprise that many video artists — Bill Viola, Marlon Riggs, and Lyn Blumenthal, among numerous others — have gravitated towards audiovisual forms that recall and combine documentary and avant-garde traditions.[4] The same may be said for HISTORY AND MEMORY and DONUTS.[5]

But while their videos share several similarities, Tajiri and Tanaka approach their common subject in considerably different ways. As Tajiri wades through found footage and her parents' reticent memories to find her "own history," Tanaka centers her video around a momentous autobiographical event: the discovery of her long-missing father in a halfway house for the mentally ill and her efforts to bring him back into the family. Approaching the issue of the internment through the ambiguities and disruptions of video art, Tajiri and Tanaka cast a compelling light on a history obscured by silence and absence. But rather than repudiate silence and absence, the videos utilize these elements to open up the audiovisual image and expose it to new possibilities. Silence and absence become the means of history's illumination.

THE SILENCE OF HISTORY

"No person shall...be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." — from Article V of the Amendments to the *Constitution of the United States*

These words should have protected Japanese Americans from mistreatment by the U.S. government during World War II. But they didn't. Not long after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, over 120,000 U.S. residents of Japanese ancestry — more than 2/3 of them U.S. citizens — were forced to evacuate their homes on the West Coast before they were herded into internment camps. Even though no evidence of espionage or sabotage was ever brought against any Japanese American during the war, all 120,000 were compelled to leave their houses and possessions, bringing with them only as much as could fit into a suitcase. The ten camps were located on inhospitable land with weather conditions that were sometimes punishing, and the hastily built living quarters offered only minimal protection from the elements.

But despite the transparency of this injustice, the overwhelming majority of Japanese Americans complied with the evacuation. Although a number of discontented activists fought back via the legal system and civil disobedience,[6] many more felt cowed by what writer and former internee Michi Weglyn called "the stain of dishonor we collectively felt for the treachery of Pearl Harbor." [7] Japanese Americans of the 1940s often resented the everyday experience of racial discrimination, but most had also been raised with the Japanese cultural precept of *gaman*, which taught them "internalization...and suppression of anger and emotion." [8] Marked by white racism as people inherently "other" than U.S. nationals, most Japanese Americans ironically felt obliged to prove their loyalty to their country by surrendering the very rights guaranteed to them as citizens or legal residents of the United States.

After the war, Japanese American communities stressed reabsorption into the larger U.S. society, and former internees were encouraged to put the experience behind them. Compelled to tolerate an intolerable injustice, Japanese Americans,

particularly those who lived through the internment, developed very ambivalent attitudes toward this chapter of their history. Many remained silent about the war years, telling their children little about the internment:

"According to *nisei* playwright Wakako Yamauchi...*sansei* have accused the *nisei* of not wanting to talk about the evacuation experience. *Nisei* silence, she contends, stems partly from the fact that many *nisei* were "overwhelmed by a current of events we could neither understand nor stem" and partly from an attitude of "self-defense," since perhaps "deep inside something tells us we could have been braver, or stronger, and what has happened is past history and what good does it do to bring back those events that might prove that we could have, should have, behaved more courageously." [9]

Since the U.S. mainstream was also uncomfortable looking back on an embarrassing breach of the Bill of Rights, knowledge about the Japanese American internment during World War II was downplayed for the next 30 years, almost to the point of being written out of U.S. history.[10] While a few internment survivors agitated for greater public and governmental recognition of their grievances, the *sansei* — more confident in their national identity and inspired by the civil rights struggles of the 1960s — took the lead in seeking redress of this injustice. Thanks to their efforts, the American Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was passed, requiring the U.S. government to render an official apology and \$20,000 in reparations to each of the remaining camp survivors.

Two mainstream dramatizations of the internment experience have been made by white filmmakers: John Korty based his N.B.C. television film *FAREWELL TO MANZANAR* (1976) on the memoirs of Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, a seven-year-old girl at the time of her imprisonment; and in his Hollywood feature *COME SEE THE PARADISE* (1990), Alan Parker viewed the experience through the eyes of an internee's white husband. Both films were criticized for their highly circumscribed and comforting portrayals of this discomfiting event.[11] Largely dissatisfied with Hollywood's treatment of their history, the question for Japanese American artists and filmmakers remains: How does one represent the internment in the face of the internees' reticence and the bias of the official U.S. position at the time? *HISTORY AND MEMORY* and *DONUTS* respond by presenting moving meditations on the complexity of perception and the uncertainty of experience.

But this seems to be a curious approach. Why would the artists treat a long-obscured and contested moment of U.S. history — a clear dereliction of the Constitution that must never happen again — in such an ambiguous and ambivalent manner?[12] Why do Tajiri and Tanaka focus on the vagaries of perception, when they could use their videos to "set the record straight"? Such a question presumes a wholeness of history and a homogeneity of experience that is frequently upheld by dominant narrative forms, including the classical documentary. Since a monological narrative of history may be manipulated to soften or exclude oppositional perspectives, a contrary view will not necessarily be secured by the uncritical adoption of dominant audiovisual constructs. Instead, *HISTORY AND MEMORY* and *DONUTS* question monological power through the breakdown of dominant audiovisual and narrative forms. And the means of the artists' interrogation are traceable to alternate narrative strategies employed by

other Asian American women artists.

In *Articulate Silences*, her study of three second-generation Asian-North American women writers (Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Joy Kogawa), King-Kok Cheung investigates how silence may be utilized as an oppositional discourse in a Western-dominant society. Because Eurocentric cultures have often viewed Asian silence as a mark of "inscrutability" or "complacency," many Asian American artists since the 1960s have embraced Western-style outspokenness as a means to proclaim their critical presence.[13] This outspokenness often results in the devaluing of silence. But although Cheung upholds "the importance of breaking [imposed] silence," she also seeks to reclaim the expressive and oppositional powers overlooked by logocentrism. The Asian American writers she studies

"reveal through their own manners of telling and through their characters, that silences — textual ellipses, nonverbal gestures, authorial hesitations (as against moral, historical, religious or political authority) — can also be articulate." [14]

This "silence" isn't a weakness or self-censorship on the writers' part but an artistic and historical strategy.

Cheung describes how silence may be incorporated into a text to "subvert a monologic [concept of] reality." The silences imposed upon and utilized by some Asian American female writers, both as racial "minorities" and as women, may be theorized as a "double-voiced discourse," a term that Cheung uses in three ways:

"First, I use the term to subsume the various methods by which the three authors circumvent authoritarian narration and signify the instability of "truth" and "history"... Second, the term is directly associated with women's writing, which is often "coded"...or made up of a "dominant" and a "muted" story...The third form of double-voiced discourse — one propounded by critics of multicultural literature — refers specifically to the dual lineage of hyphenated writers...As minority women, these writers are subject not only to the white gaze of the larger society but also to a communal gaze. Mediating between a dominant culture that advertises free speech (but maintains minority silence) and an ethnic one that insists on the propriety of reticence, all three writers have developed methods of indirection that reflect their female, racial, and bicultural legacies." [15]

Sharing in these legacies, Tajiri and Tanaka make use of their own "double-voiced discourse" to examine the "instability of 'truth' and 'history.'" The artists' comparable use of understatement and indirection creates another muted discourse to unstitch the "seamless" narratives of the dominant society. And through their discourses of silence, the *sansei* artists seek to examine, understand, and reclaim the silence of the *nisei* generation. The internment experience was — and remains-profound because it affected so many different people on an intimate, personal level. The internment created a dislocation of the senses, as well as a dislocation in space and politics. This is the level that the videos seek to address and explore — without the burden of lecturing the audience.

FILLING THE VOID

Janice Tanaka's WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THESE DONUTS, ANYWAY? becomes instantly linked to the storytelling drive of commercial media because of the video's unusual and compelling non-fiction narrative: a grown daughter finds her long-missing father in a mental institution. Tanaka's earlier videos, such as THE HEISENBERG UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE (1988) and MEMORIES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AMNESIA (1989), downplay traditional modes of narrative in favor of interrogating the communicative power of erratic images and sounds. So, Tanaka's earlier work suggests a certain skepticism about the very concept of narrative.[16] However, the narrative imperative at the center of DONUTS is so commanding that it demands greater attention to elements of story and autobiography. The project's penchant for narrative treatment is best illustrated by an anecdote: shortly after the video's initial exhibition, Tanaka, an avant-garde video artist, was approached by a Hollywood producer about developing the idea into a traditional dramatic film. (Tanaka discouraged the producer's interest.)[17]

DONUTS begins with a white screen bleeding into black, with the letters of the title appearing one by one, as they crawl across the screen. Slowly, the silhouette of a man's head emerges from the darkness. Tanaka's voice murmurs from the soundtrack:

"After the death of my mother in 1988, I began looking for my father, whom I hadn't seen since I was three. The few sparse memories I had of him were torn by confusion and what I believed had become an opaque feeling of loss. I hoped to restore family history and, through that process, perhaps a part of myself. On a deeper level, unconscious to me then, I thought, by finding him, I'd find parental comfort and the key to making sense of my own life. Instead, a murky distance separated me from the man I met and the man I wished would be."

Then, we hear the voice of President Franklin Roosevelt announcing the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the war against Japan. A collage of images follows, layering stills and stock footage of the evacuation with shots of the silhouette (whom we take to be Tanaka's father). More voices on the soundtrack read from news reports documenting the growing hysteria against anyone looking Japanese. As the man in the silhouette becomes clearer, we hear Tanaka's voice talking about receiving upsetting letters from her father. There begins another visual collage of period images and video footage, with facts about the internment and the forces behind it written on titles that crawl along the bottom of the screen.

The video's opening doesn't clearly present the exposition of the story it's going to tell. Although Tanaka's voiceover unambiguously states her search for her father, it's followed by words and images that don't unfold in an easily comprehensible fashion. The facts and footage about the internment seem to crash headlong into each other, frustrating a smooth sense of historical progression. And then, there's the narrative jump between these reported incidents and Tanaka's voice (addressed to her father) talking about the letters. When did Tanaka receive these letters, before or after she found her father? Any answer, any hint of narrative progress, is immediately thwarted by the video since it returns to events that occurred at the outbreak of the war. The layering of these sounds and images (including actors' voices re-enacting disputes among the *nisei* internees) overpowers the viewer's

comprehension, as it portrays in-fighting among the Japanese Americans and suggests the U.S. government's ability to set them against each other. This opening is perplexing: anyone expecting a clear-cut family melodrama is instantly frustrated and overwhelmed by the onrush of sounds and images.

For a clearer view of what DONUTS is doing, it's useful to look briefly at another work on the same subject: Lise Yasui and Ann Tegnell's *A FAMILY GATHERING* (1988), an internment documentary that was broadcast on P.B.S.' "The American Experience." *A FAMILY GATHERING* falls firmly into the tradition of the "talking-head" documentary. The film interviews witnesses to past events (co-director Yasui's extended Japanese American family) and illustrates their commentary with stills and stock footage. Words and images validate each other: words provide a narrative/historical context for the images, as images provide the historical veracity of what the voice is saying. Skillfully blended together, sound and image usually combine to close off interrogation into the ontology of the history being narrated.[18]

A FAMILY GATHERING slightly complicates this closure by having Yasui act as a first-person narrator and as an unseen "character" within the narrative as she interviews members of her own extended family. She admits to being an unreliable narrator (the film starts with a "memory" she made up). Her film project gets off to a false start, and the visuals stress the materiality of her father's home movies. But the film never questions the cinematic relation between word and image ("This is my grandfather," says Yasui's voice, as an old photo of her grandfather clearly appears on the screen). Ultimately, *A FAMILY GATHERING*, in the talking-head tradition, creates a coherent authorial space that structures the viewer into the subject position of the investigative filmmaker. Closure is achieved through the interview/narrative process, as Yasui goes from ignorance to knowledge, from being an unreliable narrator to a reliable one. (Closure is redoubled through the authoritative presence of T.V. host David McCullough who frames the film's P.B.S. broadcast.) While *A FAMILY GATHERING* is in many ways compelling, its structure elides questions of perception. For example, if Yasui is only one of the directors, why isn't co-director Tegnell also included as a character in the documentary? How is her presence manifested in the film?[19]

In contrast, questions of perception are at the very heart of *WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THESE DONUTS, ANYWAY?* Avoiding clearly laid-out exposition, the video separates itself from the documentary tradition. This approach distinguishes the work from a classical "documentary" and marks it as "video art." Tanaka makes her own use of talking-head conventions when she interviews her uncle, Togo Tanaka, who was arrested and detained by the F.B.I. after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Wearing a suit and with the prerequisite bookshelf behind him, Togo speaks authoritatively and articulately about his experience, which the video accompanies with clippings from the newspaper he was working for at the time. While *DONUTS* doesn't ask us to question the truth of Togo's story, it does disrupt the convention of the authoritative witness by abruptly bringing him back later in the video to discuss another matter: his struggle with cancer. This time, Togo is dressed more informally and is seen at his home in a medium shot. Instead of talking about events long ago (as he did earlier), Togo now talks about his recent fight with the disease and how it has affected him spiritually. The video images take us around Togo's home but make no explicit connection between his cancer and

the internment. This makes the viewer uncomfortable: the elevated voice of authority has unexpectedly been humanized by bringing him down from his pedestal of historical expertise and into an empathic realm of physical vulnerability.

Despite its compelling premise, DONUTS doesn't use its nonfiction images and first-person narration in a melodramatic manner. The video's opening suggests that it will withhold the clear depiction of Tanaka's father — whose name is Jack — until some dramatic crescendo in the story. But when her father does clearly appear some 17 minutes into the one-hour running time, the moment is abrupt and anticlimactic. With his withered face featured in a traditional talking-head camera set-up and with his mouth dry from years of medication, Jack is as rambling and incoherent as Togo is concise and articulate. As the visuals intercut shots of his admission forms to a mental hospital, we hear Tanaka's voice over questioning how she can interpret what her father is saying. This undercutting of Jack's authority as a witness might have been taken as condescension if it weren't for what comes next: Jack is taken to see a doctor and is asked to remember some numbers as a memory test. Jack remembers both the numbers and the order, but the doctor claims that the order was wrong. This moment heightens an issue that Tanaka has been suggesting all along: Is Jack really mentally ill, or was his illness induced by his years of electroshock therapy?

Earlier in the video, Tanaka shows a blurry close up of Jack, as a title crawls at the bottom of the screen, saying that the study of mental illness is a culturally biased science. Next, Tanaka's voice over recounts a memory as the camera scans a dimly lit room. Her mother, Tanaka recalls, told her many years ago that her father was insane because he wrote letters to the President protesting the internment. The hazy image merely accompanies the voice, rather than illustrating or affirming what is said. When the video cuts to Togo's talking-head interview, he discusses a strange moment from his F.B.I. interrogation: An agent "diagnosed" Togo's Japanese American newspaper as "schizophrenic" because it was catering to both an English-speaking readership and a Japanese-speaking readership. The rebuttal is unstated but plain: On what authority did the agent make this determination? Moreover, the video runs a subtitle at the bottom of the frame after Jack's first interview: "20 volts administered to the genitals is considered torture, 170 volts administered to the head is called treatment."

For much of the video, Tanaka contrasts Jack's inarticulate and sometimes incoherent speech with Togo's poised and articulate interviews, as Tanaka's voice over wonders what potential her father might have reached if not for the internment. The video creates a climax of sorts when Jack and Togo are reunited near the end, and the opposites are brought together. However, the moment is understated and deprived of narrative import: the brothers have some refreshment at a restaurant and make small talk. There's no grand swelling of emotions, no great truth revealed.

Instead, the moment prefigures Tanaka's own conclusion about the events. As the image track displays layered shots of a hallway and a kitchen (whose?), we hear Tanaka's voice talk about how she now realizes the internment's influence upon her, about how her mother tried to escape the shame of incarceration by moving the family to an all-white neighborhood in Chicago, about the sense of isolation

Tanaka felt growing up, and about the sense of loneliness she experienced when her own grown daughter announced her engagement. The picture cuts to scenes from Tanaka's daughter's wedding as Tanaka's voice continues:

"Over the past two years, my children and I, working together on this project, have perhaps not so ironically learned: when you have a past, it is easier to believe that the present has a reason, and that perhaps with this insight, one may begin to look to the future with hope."

It's a heartwarming conclusion, but not one that was built up to by the video. Rather than leading up to and affirming this personal realization, the rush and confluence of sounds and images have created an inquisitive, sometimes disorienting distrust of what is said to be "true." Given the momentous events in Tanaka's life, perhaps this kind of intimate, self-reflexive affirmation is the only conclusion that could be drawn while still avoiding the untrustworthy finality of the of the traditional closed narrative. Had it ended here, DONUTS could be criticized for retreating from the internment's pressing political concerns. But the video goes on.

It gives the last word to Jack, who has gradually demonstrated his coherence, casting further doubt on the diagnosis of mental illness. At one point in the video, Tanaka asks her father, now relaxing in a domestic setting, if he understands what redress is (meaning the reparation money due to him under the Civil Liberties Act), and Jack gives a reasonable response, demonstrating his understanding of both the compensation and why he's entitled to it. This moment seems to remove any doubt about Jack's ability to be accepted back into the family. In the last sequence, Jack reads the letter from President Bush that accompanies his redress payment. We hear Jack's voice read the words of official regret, as we see old photos from the internment, each fading to white after a few seconds. We're never told who the unknown Japanese American people in the photographs are or what happened to them. But the end still affirms the resilience and political empowerment of the community. The words on the soundtrack tell of one search for justice that has reached a satisfactory resolution, and they speak of the success that Japanese Americans have achieved in attaining redress.

Anyone given to a rigorous psychoanalytic reading of the video might criticize Tanaka for simply accepting patriarchal authority through the recoupment of her father, who, speaking the words of the national patriarch, represents the larger social authority. But such a reading would accept the monoculturalism of Freudianism and its descendants. Jack Tanaka may be a father, but he is also a national subaltern whose government deprived him of his role as a patriarchal figure. The video mentions his long years on the fringes of society, where he was an outsider lost to his family. His status as both a subaltern and an outsider hardly make him an uncomplicated patriarchal figure. Rather, Jack stands as a rupture in the image of the compliant internee who (according to the U.S. propaganda of the time) "willingly" submitted to evacuation and imprisonment. Through the figure of Jack, the viewer may see the very idea of "illness" as a rupture of social conditioning, and one may wonder if Togo's cancer is in some way a rupture of his more restrained and rationalizing response to the internment.

Moreover, the enigmatic images at the end of the final scene leave the narrative in a disturbing state of incompleteness. How many other stories are there to be told?

What will their conclusions be like? Indeed, Janice Tanaka's question in the cumbersome title WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THESE DONUTS, ANYWAY? instantly signals incompleteness, something remaining to be accounted for. The title refers to a time when Jack escaped from the asylum and took a job as a deliveryman for a bakery, selling leftover donuts to policemen and billing them. Tanaka views this as her father collecting a kind of redress before it became a political issue. So, the title (referring to an object with an absence at its center) suggests that there are still amends to be made, other absences to be explored. A father has been found and a family, however imperfectly, has been reunited. But this individual story is still missing a firm sense of narrative closure that might have been provided by a more classical documentary form. Although it depicts the filling of one family absence, the video itself is left open-ended.

A viewer expecting a more polemical take on the internment might be bewildered. Given the outrageousness of what Tanaka suspects might have happened to her father — that he was institutionalized and subjected to electroshock because he was a political dissident — the viewer might wonder why the video itself doesn't exhibit more outrage. Preferring understatement to assertion, DONUTS instead uses its melange of sounds and images to question the idea of authority. Frequently, Tanaka's voice speaks over the images, raising questions and doubts about what conclusions to draw from these events. Pictures and sounds are frequently kept separate from each other, kept from creating a sense of diegetic wholeness. Old footage or stills are electronically layered with visual elements that prevent them from merely illustrating what's on the soundtrack (as in the talking-head technique). Sound and image undercut each other, interrogating their own powers of documentation. Even the verité sequences that do utilize synchronous sound usually contain internal contradictions (such as Jack's memory test) or are followed by scenes that question the validity of what has just transpired.

Still, why didn't Tanaka use her video to investigate her father's institutionalization and reach some conclusion regarding this issue? An answer can only be inferred by the viewer: apparently, Tanaka is skeptical of the "authorities" of both medical science and the mediated image. Rather than reify the conventions of the documentary in searching for the public "truth" of her father's treatment, Tanaka questions the veracity of history as communicated by the audiovisual. Therefore, any conclusions that documentary conventions (or, recalling the movie producer's interest, Hollywood conventions) might have reached about her father's institutionalization would also be suspect. Through its visual plenitude and its insinuation of the unspoken, WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THESE DONUTS, ANYWAY? challenges the image's ability to represent history, any history. At the same time, the creation of images — the creation of the video, which Tanaka acknowledges as a family project — can act as a means of intergenerational healing, an affirmative process that bridges the familial gap caused by this lingering historical trauma. The image can confine, but it can also liberate.

EXCAVATING THE ABSENCE

The power of representation and the elusiveness of the referent are the primary subjects of Rea Tajiri's HISTORY AND MEMORY. Like Tanaka and Yasui, Tajiri goes in search of a history to offset the silence of her family. Unlike DONUTS or A FAMILY GATHERING, however, HISTORY AND MEMORY has no momentous

family secret to reveal. Instead, Tajiri's half-hour video questions the very ability to know the past through its representations in the present, and it investigates how to create new representations that can oppose the circumscriptions of the dominant media.

Given the numbing profusion of pictures on television, a video artist is frequently hard pressed to create visuals that can resist being swept up and appropriated into the deadening deluge of televisual images. To do this, Tajiri utilizes a strategy brilliant in both its effect and its simplicity — her video begins with crawling titles. These titles describe an imaginary event: her grandfather's ghost watches her parents argue on the twentieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor. The titles move languidly up the screen, and the soundtrack's barely audible, meandering music undermines any drama in the progression of words. The use of crawling titles to take the place of photographic images is a strategy that Tajiri has used before in such videos as *HITCHCOCK TRILOGY* (1987). At a time when even U.S. audiences for non-Hollywood films are said to have lost the habit of reading subtitles,[20] the relatively long duration of motile, descriptive words on a screen is decidedly "untelegenic," and it instantly suggests resistance to the representing image.

Before the titles are through, we hear Tajiri's voice over describe a picture in her mind: her mother's filling a canteen in the middle of the desert. Tajiri makes it clear that she doesn't know where this mental image came from. The video shows us a glimpse of a woman (played by Tajiri herself) filling a canteen, before the image quickly fades to black. The video layers the titles, voice, and image, so the elements compete for the viewer's attention and make the absorption of all the information rather difficult at first.

Beginning what appears to be an arbitrary sequence of events, *HISTORY AND MEMORY* then cuts to Tajiri's voice as she reminisces about her sister taking a photo of a classmate she had a crush on and then intermingling the photo in a box full of old movie stills. Tajiri recreates the picture taking, with two performers (Sokhi Wagner and Noel Shaw) acting the roles of the sister and the classmate. In the re-enactment, the actor playing the classmate is Asian, but when the camera cuts to the "sister's" hand holding a photo among the movie stills, the young man in the picture is white. This calls attention to the recreated status of the sequence.

After this stylistically anomalous prologue, *HISTORY AND MEMORY* begins its use of found footage, layered by titles and voices. Over images of Pearl Harbor — images taken at the time of the bombing and marked as such by the titles — Tajiri's voice continues:

"There are things which have happened in the world while there were cameras rolling, things we have images for."

The scenes shifts to footage from old U.S. and Japanese newsreels that employ recreations of the Pearl Harbor bombing, including some combat clips from the Hollywood movie *FROM HERE TO ETERNITY* (1953). "There are other things," Tajiri's voice says, "which happened while there were no cameras watching, which we restage in front of cameras to have images of." As the screen goes black, the voice goes on:

"There are things which have happened for which the only images that

exist are in the minds of the observers present at the time-while there are things which have happened for which there are no observers, except the spirits of the dead."

The titles crawl up the screen again. This time, they describe an incident that happened to Tajiri's family before she was born: while the family was interned, the house they had been forced to evacuate was uprooted from its foundation and hauled away. The video later says that the family never learned what happened to the house.

HISTORY AND MEMORY continues this layering of image, sound, voice, and titles. The video intercuts clips from the Hollywood musical YANKEE DOODLE DANDY (1942) with those from a U.S. government propaganda film about the evacuation called JAPANESE RELOCATION (1942). The screen displays footage taken by the U.S. Army Signal Corps, reputed to be of the assembly centers. But we hear the voices of Tajiri's parents as they watch the footage, and they dispute what's being shown. The video goes on to acknowledge that cameras weren't allowed in the internment camps, except for those cameras controlled by the U.S. government. However, Tajiri recovers some homemovie footage of an internment camp shot with a smuggled camera by an evacuee named David Tatsuno. The rough 8mm footage is strikingly stark and beautifully simple. The unaffected naturalism of these images creates a relaxed contrast to the self-consciousness and staginess of the government films.[21]

Through its unconventional mingling of original video material and found footage, HISTORY AND MEMORY creates a context in which it's impossible to view any image uncritically. We're instantly made aware of the camera's power to privilege a moment in history simply by being there during a photogenic instant. Our thoughts are drawn to the "need" to create images of an event in order to grant it a sense of importance and to affirm its existence. Just as important, the video stresses the power invested in images and the power exerted to create or prevent them. Tajiri isn't simply stringing old film clips together, nor is she denying the iconic power of the industrialized image. Instead, she reroutes that power to uncover an alternate history repressed or denied by dominant images-a history that informs the images just the same.[22]

However, there's another element for Tajiri to contend with: the silence of her family about their internment experience. In contrast to A FAMILY GATHERING, Tajiri can't prod her relatives to say very much about the internment. Her mother refuses to recall anything about that time, saying only that an internee acquaintance who dwelt on the experience eventually went mad (an anecdote that may bring Jack Tanaka to mind). Tajiri's parents never even appear in the video, except in old photographs. When we hear their voices, the picture track is usually occupied by a black screen, found footage, or titles. We briefly glimpse a woman who might be Tajiri's mother as she uncooperatively dashes out of the video camera's range. With her family refusing to serve as witnesses to the past, and with the untrustworthiness of the old archival footage, Tajiri (unlike Yasui) is unable to play the role of the investigative historian who brings the family's stories together in a polished package. HISTORY AND MEMORY disallows a fluid, linear recounting of the past that is the hallmark of so many talking-head documentaries.

Her family's reticence spurs Tajiri to go looking on her own. Her voice over says:

"I began searching for a history, my own history, because I had known all along that the stories I heard were not true and parts had been left out. I remember having this feeling when I was growing up, that I was haunted by something, that I was living within a family full of ghosts. There was this place that they knew about. I had never been there, yet I had a memory for it. I could remember a time of great sadness before I was born. We had been moved, uprooted. We had lived with a lot of pain. I had no idea where these memories came from, yet I knew the place."

With video camera in hand, Tajiri retraces her mother's evacuation, first to the Salinas Rodeo Grounds (the former site of her mother's assembly center) and then to the ruins of the Poston internment camp in Arizona. However, this journey doesn't endow the video with strong, Hollywood-style narrative momentum, because Tajiri continues intercutting her original footage of the trip with film clips and other visual resources that disrupt narrative progression. She compares her journey to the Hollywood film *BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK* (1954), in which Spencer Tracy plays a character who uncovers a hate crime in a small desert town, the murder of a Japanese American man named "Kimoko" after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.[23] Tajiri reflects on how her visit to Poston is like the Tracy character's visit to Black Rock: a reminder of a history that the townspeople want to forget. Although she locates the exact spot where her mother's old barrack once stood, Tajiri doesn't uncover any great secret or draw any climactic conclusion from the journey. In fact, she likens her hunt for the camp to Tracy's hunt for Kimoko, who is never seen in the Hollywood movie:

"Kimoko's disappearance from Black Rock was like our disappearance from history. His absence is his presence. Somehow, I could identify with this search, this search for an ever-absent image and the desire to create an image where there are so few."

Tajiri's desire to create an image is underscored by another Hollywood film clip, this time from *COME SEE THE PARADISE*. However, Tajiri undercuts its expensive spectacle by having her nephew read his highly critical newspaper review of the film, and by intercutting stills and archival footage against the movie trailer. The juxtaposition of the images once again reminds us of the materiality of both the Hollywood film, *COME SEE THE PARADISE*, and the archival footage, of the conditions under which both were made. In this context, it's easy to view the Hollywood internment drama — conspicuously featuring an out-of-place white protagonist — as an extension of the propaganda films and their circumscribing powers of representation. This contrasting set of images allows us to reflect upon the Japanese American histories and perspectives that have been excluded or marginalized by the eurocentrism of Parker's film. Again, the absence becomes a presence, but this time the absence is palpable.

The journey to Poston does allow Tajiri to better understand her mother's "loss of memory." Tajiri returns to the recreation of the mental image she had, the image of her mother's filling a canteen and washing her face in the desert (an image intermittently glimpsed throughout the video). Tajiri's voice says that it's the one memory she has of her mother talking about the internment. Tajiri dedicates this image of the woman in the desert to her mother. The image is created to

complement her family's silence and to help imagine the history still to be told.

HISTORY AND MEMORY is haunted by a desire for the internment experience to be captured and resolved by an image. Even though her video clearly and brilliantly demonstrates the unlikeliness of any image to capture and resolve anything beyond the conditions of its own making, Tajiri's desire to affirm her family's history in a specifically visual way — affirm their hardship and resilience — endures to the very end.

This relentless desire for visual affirmation is surprising because the video initially appears to be heading in a different direction. In the earlier sequence that re-enacts Tajiri's sister taking a picture of her classmate, the video seems to be critical of using a photographic image as a stand-in for its referent. Tajiri's voice over says that her sister had a crush on her classmate, but she would rather take a picture of him than talk to him. So, the image is used as a substitute for a potentially deeper form of contact—the image is created as a fetish. Moreover, the picture is taken while the classmate argues with the sister, so the image-making itself isn't depicted as a moment of communion.

As it is stored, this photograph mingles with stills from Hollywood movies, a mingling which extends the critique to dominant images. Tajiri concludes the sequence by saying,

"I often wondered how the movies influenced our lives, and I often wondered where my sister's habit of observing others from a distance came from."

Hollywood and the distant, fetishizing observer are compared. The sequence suggests that the dominant images are themselves fetishes for an absent desire, a desire to contain and possess something ephemeral: history, maybe, or a more glamorous self-image. Like the sister's photo of her classmate, these fetishes are likely to distance the observer from a potentially deeper experience.

The criticism of dominant imagery continues throughout the video. Hollywood's narrative authority and that of the government film clips are subverted by electronic interventions which draw our attention to the limits of the image, to what has been left out. And much of the video questions the reliance of both history and memory upon the photographed image (as the signifier of history and the evoker of memory). The video seems to be headed towards reclaiming that which is not — will not be, cannot be — imaged (the "ever-absent image") as an equally valid signifier of history and memory, something to usurp the privileged primacy of the fetishized photograph. However, going against the tenor of her tape, Tajiri abruptly shifts to affirm "the desire to create an image where there are so few." She closes the video with her own image: the sequence reenacting her mother filling the canteen. The sequence is Tajiri's "own image" in both senses: an image she created and an image of herself (as her mother).

However, this visual moment is different from the sister's photograph. This is an image that acknowledges its own creation, its own limits. It's an image that has been brought about in the absence of others. And where her sister's photo was used to keep two people at a distance, Tajiri's reenactment is used to draw the artist and her mother together.

This image acknowledges that it can't resolve the internment experience or contain the family's history, but — and here's the irony — Tajiri still wants it to. She still upholds the power of the image to validate history and memory, to validate the ontological link between the signifier and the referent it supposedly signifies (however removed the referent — in this case, the internment — might be). The tape's image-affirming conclusion is a perplexing one because the rest of the video so ingeniously uncouples this magic link between an image and its referent.

This isn't to say that Tajiri's conclusion lacks power. On the contrary, the reenactment is contextualized as a moment of healing between daughter and mother, between an individual and her family; it packs a strong emotional punch. Indeed, it could be argued that any refusal to affirm the image would surrender all pictorial power to the dominant institutions that have marginalized Japanese Americans and their history. Through her own appropriation of dominant media, Tajiri has defiantly refused such passive acquiescence. Still, despite the emotions one feels as the video fades out, one is left to wonder (with no less a sense of fetishistic yearning) what HISTORY AND MEMORY might have been if it had followed its original course and sought to reclaim the signifying power of the invisible.

IN/CONCLUSION

Rather than reify the image as an inherently truthful and uncomplicated illustration of the past, HISTORY AND MEMORY and WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THESE DONUTS, ANYWAY? question the image's very ability to represent the past, as they explore a missing history. However, both videos also uphold the use of images as a means to communicate and validate an experience of history, an experience of the past and present. Instead of denying or contradicting the power of the visual, the two videos undermine the preferred dominant readings of audiovisual images. And in doing so, Tajiri and Tanaka locate alternate readings that may subtly uncover more subversive meanings.

The videos also mark moments of healing between the *nisei* and *sansei* generations. The two works come to terms with absence (an absent father, an absent history) by focusing on images that evoke absence: unclear picture tracks, a black screen, a missing photo on an institution form, a missing house. Here, absence may be seen as a visual approximation of "silence," specifically the silence of the *nisei* regarding their internment. Through the exploration and visualization of absence, both works reach an understanding towards the older generation's silence, how it can be a survival strategy — in Marita Sturken's words, "a memory that is often disguised as forgetting." [24] The video artists absorb and honor *nisei* silence by the use of understatement and by permitting the viewer to discern the visual and historical "silences" surrounding the image: what is not depicted, what is not allowed to be depicted, and how these influence the depictions that do exist.

Instead of merely contradicting history's muteness by forcefully asserting an alternate ontology of past events (a strategy that might be suitable in other internment projects), the videos insinuate themselves into the silence, explore its contours of absence, and unearth the contradictions of a dominant society that has muted and marginalized Japanese American history. Where mere contradiction often replaces one monological "certainty" with another, the videos use

understatement and indirection both to undercut both the closed narrative's presumed certitude and the dominant culture that prizes it. DONUTS and HISTORY AND MEMORY, then, adopt a mode of expression close in spirit to Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "minority discourse":

"The minority discourse] does not simply confront the pedagogical, or powerful master-discourse with a contradictory or negating referent. It does not turn contradiction into a dialectical process. It interrogates its object by initially withholding its objective. Insinuating itself into the terms of the reference of the dominant discourse, the supplementary [discourse] antagonizes the implicit power to generalize, to produce the sociological solidity. The questioning of the supplement is not a repetitive rhetoric of the 'end' of society but a meditation on the disposition of space and time from which the narrative of the nation must begin." [25]

Without reifying some idealized ethnic/artistic predisposition handed down to the artists by blood, the viewer may still look upon the videos' methods of indirection and understatement as an artistic strategy that draws upon the artists' cultural heritage. This isn't merely the transplanting of an Asian cultural tradition into a European-derived society, a relocation that leaves both Asian and European influences untouched (if such a thing were possible). Instead, these videos respectfully modify an Asian tradition of reticence and reserve in order to interact with, infuse, and expand the more outspoken image-making traditions of the dominant Western society.

Rather than adopt the assimilationist's desperate denial of *gaman* in a misguided effort to be "more American," the videos seek new value in an old Asian cultural tradition, a mutual assimilation of "East" and "West" that blurs cultural distinctions. They mark an absorption of an "Old World" cultural heritage that helps to transform the "New World" of the larger multicultural society. This blending of traditions alters, enriches, and sheds meaningful light onto the evolving, heterogeneous culture(s) of the United States. HISTORY AND MEMORY and WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THESE DONUTS, ANYWAY? follow an evolving audiovisual quest to illuminate the recesses in history, to make the silence visible.

NOTES

This article is dedicated to Hisaye Yamamoto.

1. This is a central issue in Michael Renov, ed., *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993). The term, "non-fiction film," is also problematic, since it could be applied to Hollywood bio-pics or other dramatic treatments of a non-fiction subject.
2. David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 12.
3. Erika Suderburg, "The Electronic Corpse: Notes for an Alternative Language of History and Amnesia," in *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, ed. Michael Renov and Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 105.

4. Not every video artist, however, regularly draws upon documentary and avant-garde conventions. For example, Bruce and Norman Yonemoto frequently adopt the codes of Hollywood cinema, while Joan Logue plays with the grammar of television commercials. See Beverle Houston, "Television and Video Text: A Crisis of Desire," in *Resolution: A Critique of Video Art*, ed. Patti Podesta (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, 1986), pp. 116-23.

5. The two videos have been compared before in Marita Sturken, "The Politics of Video Memory: Electronic Erasures and Inscriptions," in Renov and Suderburg, pp. 1-12.

6. Some of the resisters include Fred Korematsu, Minoru Yasui, and Gordon Hirabayashi, whose test cases in court challenged the exclusion orders in California, Oregon, and Washington state, respectively. Korematsu's case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which upheld the constitutionality of the internment on December 18, 1944. (This appalling decision would not be reversed until 1986.) Those who engaged in civil disobedience include the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee of the internment camp in Heart Mountain, Wyoming. This organization of draft-age men, under the leadership of Frank Emi, refused to submit themselves for induction. Its members were prosecuted and convicted for violating the draft.

7. Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1976), p. 21. Consult Weglyn for a more detailed account of the internment.

8. Harry H. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: Evolution of a Subculture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 136; quoted in King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1993), p. 32.

9. Elaine H. Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), p. 137. Kim cites Wakako Yamauchi, "The Poetry of the Issei on the Relocation Experience," *CALAFIA: The California Poetry*, ed. Ishmael Reed (Berkeley: Yardbird Books, 1979), p. lxxi.

10. Some small acknowledgement was made of the internment in the years immediately following the war. Early books on the subject included Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), and Jacobus terBroek et al., *Prejudice, War, and the Constitution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954).

11. For reactions to Korty's film, see Raymond Okamura, "FAREWELL TO MANZANAR: A Case of Subliminal Racism," in *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America*, ed. Emma Gee (Los Angeles: U.C.L.A. Asian American Studies Center, 1976), pp. 280-83; and Darrell Y. Hamamoto, *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 66-72. For an analysis of Parker's film, see my discussion in "COME SEE THE PARADISE: The Color of Paradise," *Jump Cut*, no. 37 (1992), pp. 51-55.

12. Controversy over the interment's legacy has grown more heated since the National Park Service announced plans to renovate the Manzanar internment camp as an historical center for tourists. See Naomi Hirahara, "Debate for 'Truth' Ensues over Manzanar Historic Site," *Rafu Shimpō* (Los Angeles), March 13, 1996, p. 1.
13. Cheung cites such outspoken Asian American artists as writer Frank Chin. For more on Chin's caustic criticism of the "deprivation of [Asian American] language in a verbal society," see "An Introduction to Chinese- and Japanese-American Literature," in *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, ed. Frank Chin et al. (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1983), pp. xxi-xxviii. See also Frank Chin, "Backtalk," in *Gee*, pp. 556-57.
14. Cheung, *Articulate Silences*, pp. 3-4.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
16. I subscribe to the proposition that, given Hollywood's dominance, all audiovisual media are viewed in a narrative context. Therefore, there is no such thing as "non-narrative" film or video. As Teresa de Lauretis puts it: "[T]here is no image outside narrative, and no filmic image outside of history, which is also to say the history of cinema including avant-garde and mainstream, classical and contemporary cinema." See de Lauretis, "Oedipus Interruptus," *Wide Angle*, 7, nos. 1-2 (1985), P. 35.
17. Information in an informal discussion with the artist.
18. See Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," in *Movies and Methods, Volume II*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 265-66.
19. For further analysis of this documentary, see Cassandra Van Buren, "[A] FAMILY GATHERING: Release from Emotional Internment," *Jump Cut*, no. 37 (1992), pp. 56-63. Co-director Yasui is also the niece of Minoru Yasui (see note 6), interviewed in the film.
20. Claudia Puig, "Independents Take Bite Out of Foreign Market," *Los Angeles Times Calendar*, May 12, 1996, p. 32.
21. Cf. Sturken, "The Politics of Video Memory," p. 6.
22. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have a term for this rechanneling of dominant energy into subversive energy: "media jujitsu." See Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 331-32.
23. According to all the references I can find, "Kimoko" isn't a Japanese name, especially for a man. The suffix -ko appended to a name usually means "child" and is reserved for women. I can only conclude that the name "Kimoko" is a product of the Hollywood filmmakers' ill-informed imaginations.
24. Sturken, "The Politics of Video Memory," p. 12.
25. Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the

Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 306.

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Ethnic representation and film Canvassing the field

by Karla Fuller

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Many changes have taken place in the field of writing about ethnic representation in film over the last twenty odd years. We've come a long way since Donald Bogle's signature work *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, which nearly dominated the field until recently. As a graduate student at Northwestern University in the midst of conducting my own dissertation research, I have noticed in the last year a proliferation of new works which have made their way onto the bookshelves. Authors such as Mark Reid and Ed Guerrero alone have added significant contributions to the study of African-American cinematic images.

Because of this increase in the number of books in this area, a general guide through this rich literary terrain seems very necessary. In this article, I will review and examine several books which take as their focus the subject of ethnic representation in film. The ethnic groups included in this limited survey of literature are: African American, Asian and Asian American, Chicano/ Hispanic/ Latino, and Jewish, especially American Jewish. This categorization is by no means comprehensive; many significant ethnic groups and subgroups (such as Native Americans, women, gays and lesbians) are not included.

I have included American Jewish ethnic identity as a category because of that group's unique influence in Hollywood and unusual positioning in the hierarchy of the film industry power structure. The case of U.S. Jews stands as an example of having much more creative input and decision-making power as compared to other completely disenfranchised racial/ethnic minorities. And yet, as a group, they did not possess ultimate financial control, which was held by bankers on Wall Street. I believe a significant part of the story of cinematic ethnic representation would be missed without examining a Jewish perspective.

My analysis even though confined to only four distinct groups will reveal some general tendencies and trends common to many studies of ethnic representation in film. I have grouped the selected works on cinematic ethnic representation into three main categories. The first type of book would best be described as a work that attempts primarily to provide a historical chronicle or overview (with lesser or greater detail) of the evolution of one particular ethnic group's representation in mainstream/Hollywood cinematic practices. These books are oriented toward a commercial market and general audience rather than academic. However, even

within this framework, these books list minor actors whose contributions are usually long forgotten.

The analysis inherent in these books' premise most often involves contrasting stereotypically "negative" roles to more "positive" ones as vehicles for actors of the particular ethnic group. The implication in this approach is that more "positive," "diverse," and "realistic" characters and roles in front of the camera would not only correct historically distorted and inaccurate representations but also serve to empower and help correct racial/ethnic inequities in the society at large. The title of Donald Bogle's book *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks* provides the clearest example of a "positive" and "negative" context for the analysis of ethnic screen images. In short, Bogle shows how the roles played by black film performers are either closely or less closely aligned to one of the five stereotypes (most clearly established in the film *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*) named in the title.

A second category include books that try to create and explicate a critical theory of a particular group's ethnic representation. These projects tend to be less comprehensive and more selective in the films analyzed. The level of analysis in these books is often but not always aimed at a more scholarly audience. These works also tend to concentrate more on ethnic filmmakers from within and outside the dominant filmmaking system than does the first, less intellectually targeted category. Typically these publications tend to confront not only the historical legacy of representations from the cinematic past but also make a prescriptive call for "different" ethnic images from future filmmakers. In this sense, though the works in this category stand on stronger theoretical ground and are more rigorously argued and researched, their examinations are also inclined to separate ethnic representations into classifications of "good" and "bad" images like the first group of less scholarly "overview" books. However, the criteria for evaluating "right" and "wrong" ethnic images shifts significantly in these works.

For example, in Ed Guerrero's *Framing Blackness*, the author takes an unusual stand on a film such as *MANDINGO* (1975), widely considered commercial exploitation at its most shameless:

"Beyond *MANDINGO*'s exploitation of Hollywood's commercial strategies of interracial sex and violence, the film is worthwhile for its reversed point of view on slavery, as well as for scenes and details that unmask or counter the ideological stance taken in such films as *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*..." (31-32)

Guerrero analyzes "right" and "wrong" elements working within a film text rather than categorizing an entire text or character portrayal as patently "good" or "bad."

Finally, the last category I have elected to delineate is the anthology format for writings on ethnic representation in film. Though usually one ethnic group is targeted as a focus for a collection of essays, this is not always the case. A least two anthologies take up the representation of various ethnic groups along with other subgroups (particularly gays and lesbians) as their unifying theme. Most of these anthologies contain a wide variety of approaches to cinematic ethnic images. Some are authored by independent filmmakers who are themselves fighting to create "new" images of their ethnic group. Others are written by professionals within the

dominant Hollywood system. Film critics, popular culture theorists, actors, and political activists all have a place in these collections which present discussions about the impact of receiving, creating and disseminating filmic representations of a given ethnic group from a myriad of perspectives.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND PERFORMER-ORIENTED TEXT

Black Hollywood by Gary Null (New York: Citadel, 1975):

The major studios have rarely done more than reflect and reinforce 'safe' popular attitudes. This is nowhere more apparent than in the treatment of race. In particular, the depiction of black people on the screen has not only reinforced and sharpened some of the prejudices of the white majority, but it has also to a great extent shaped the often negative image blacks have had of themselves. (7)

Null has a clear agenda, to redress the influence of "negative" Hollywood stereotypes of African Americans predominant in popular movies. He organizes the book's contents in seven chapters by decade. The author concentrates on Hollywood films which generated substantial controversy and protests, particularly in the black press. While a product of Citadel Press, well known for having stars/actors as a central focus, *Black Hollywood* goes beyond a sole emphasis on black screen performers. Null foregrounds a host of previously overlooked supporting players, championing their struggles for larger and more "positive" parts.

However, the limitations of this approach becomes especially evident when the author broaches the subject of black independent film of the 1930s, as produced by AfricanAmerican entrepreneur Oscar Micheaux. Null spends only a paragraph describing the 1932 film *THE BLACK KING*, but he also does not include information on Micheaux. Instead, his coverage of this subject consists mainly of a display of movie memorabilia (posters, production stills and promotional material) which indirectly indicates Micheaux as an independent producer. The author's emphasis on racist dynamics strictly within a performative framework and the Hollywood studio system is common to more popularly oriented works on ethnic cinematic images of the 1970s (i.e. *From Sambo to Superspade, Slow Fade to Black, Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*).

Hispanic Hollywood by George Hadley-Garcia (Citadel Press, 1990): Here is another example of the publisher's commercially oriented focus on stars/actors and their performances. The lives and careers of Latino actor and actresses are exclusively highlighted. Characteristic of the critical approach of this work, the Foreword was composed in 1979 by silent film star Delores Del Rio while the actual publication date of this book eleven years later (1990).

The central theme of this book is the nature of the Hollywood star system and its impact on the careers of Hispanic actors and actresses from the silent era to the 1980s. An attempt here is also made to structure and organize the material in decades. Every chapter constitutes a decade in Hollywood history. Yet the careers of different Hispanic actors often spill over into time frames other than the designated decade. Hadley-Garcia attempts a history of Hispanic involvement in the Hollywood picture industry using conventional benchmarks of the filmic "master narrative" — for example, the advent of sound in motion pictures as

embodied by the film THE JAZZ SINGER.

Issues of racism are often elaborated by interview material from several Latin stars of yesteryear. Many production stills are used as well as Hollywood posters that show Hispanic actors in different roles and well known Caucasian stars (Paul Muni, Bette Davis, Tyrone Power, et al.) portraying Latin roles. The book's narrative revolves around the fluctuating careers of several Hispanic actors who started during the silent era. Performers such as these provide the context for the author's discussion of issues related to racial discrimination, stereotyping and larger career limitations. Though the author designates the "greaser" as a recurrent stereotypical category throughout the text, he does not generate an extensive list of Latin stereotypes that actors were limited to. However, issues of skin color, Anglicizing of names, heavy Spanish accents, playing European or Latin as well as interethnic (ex. the Latin actor as Native American, Italian or Asian) portrayals are noted in the book. This study is of limited, yet significant, usefulness. It provides a historical overview that is, at once, loosely constructed, and yet, in some ways illuminating. Mainly, this study's contribution lies in its general rendering of the significant Hispanic addition to the Hollywood scene and also in its specific positioning of this ethnic group in the Hollywood of the silent era and in the so called "golden age" of filmmaking. This work is particularly compelling when discussing periods of greater or lesser interest in Hispanic actors, characters and themes in Hollywood. The author indicates an important dimension to ethnic characterizations in film that they are clearly connected to a larger socio-political history and that they are anything but static.

The Jew in American Cinema by Patricia Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984): Erens suggests a link between Jewish stereotypes in what she terms "Anglo-American" literature and those that have found their way to the Hollywood screen:

"..the stories and images which have appeared in twentieth-century drama and literature, as well as those which date back to biblical times. These myths, created by Jews and non-Jews alike, provide source material from which screen images were later molded. Few character types are purely filmic creations." (11)

This book identifies several Jewish archetypes already existing in literature, such as the "Jew-Villain," "Beautiful Jewess," "Good Jew," "Wandering Jew," from the outset, but Erens subsequently, compiles her own more extensive list of ethnic types which, she argues, make their way into film:

"...the other types which appear in American literature (especially those of Jewish authors) do emerge on the screen. Included here are the Peddler, the Virginal Jewess, the Stern Patriarch (more often the Pathetic Patriarch in film), the Long-Suffering Mother, the Prodigal Son, The Rose of the Ghetto, the Jewish Arriviste, the Jewish Soldier, the Sabra Heroine, the Hebrew Warrior, the Holocaust Survivor, the Jewish-American Princess, the Manipulating Mother (later the Suffocating Mother), the Benevolent Physician, the Neurotic Son, the Jewish Ugly Duckling, and the Shlemiel. The above terms are mine." (20)

The author admits to fashioning her study after "the historical image studies of Blacks and women" and creating a typology which, she suggests, is not merely critical, but can also illuminate "how types function in art." She also notes and addresses, to a limited extent throughout the book, how Jews have had a stronger influence behind the camera, in the production of their screen images, than other ethnic minority groups:

"I have attempted...to analyze the ways these types function in individual films as expressions of latent attitudes in society. This is limited in part by the fact that unlike Blacks, women, and most ethnic groups, Jews have had control of the means of production and thus have enjoyed a protected image despite their minority status in society. What emerges, then, is a fascinating but unique situation..." (28)

This book attempts to address and reconcile the idea of the performer as the primary defining agent in ethnic representation with the significant (and often definitive) influence of the creative/production personnel involved in mainstream moviemaking. This is what distinguishes Erens' work from the others in this category. It is not strictly concerned with the relationship of ethnic performers to their audiences, but also addresses the behind-the-scenes dynamics in the creation of ethnic stereotypes and characters. This approach necessarily complicates the idea of creating either wholly "positive" or "negative" images.

TOWARD A CRITICAL THEORY

Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks by Donald Bogle (New York: Continuum, 1973): One of the earliest attempts to create a critical theory of ethnic representation, this book until recently was one of the few attempts to not only write a comprehensive history of African American representation in Hollywood cinema but to also provide a critical framework for the interpretation of these images over time. As the title indicates, Bogle tries to fit all Black representation in the dominant Hollywood cinema into one of the five aforementioned categories. He defines a character or role as being either more "negative" or "positive" depending on how easily it conforms to his strictly delineated typology.

Though his thesis is argued consistently from decade to decade, Bogle's emphasis is solely on the screen performer and the "quality" of his or her role. He seems most interested in the personal impact of certain "star" performers on the audience and in assessing their performances in terms of how limiting they were. Specifically, he engages in discussions of how these African American actors and actresses negotiated the limitations of his typology.

Hollywood's Image of the Jew by Lester D. Friedman (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982): Friedman provides an illuminating look at a subset of Hollywood product — the Jewish-themed feature film. *Hollywood's Image of the Jew* spans filmmaking practice from the silent era to the early 1980s which coincides with the book's publication date. Friedman organizes his research in decades characterized in distinct, yet generalized, phrases: "The Silent Stereotypes," "The Timid Thirties," "The Fashionable Forties," "The Frightened Fifties," "The Self-Conscious Sixties," "The Self-Centered Seventies," and "The Emerging Eighties." The author is careful to contextualize his detailed textual analyses of the films not only in terms of

general Jewish social history, but also in terms of film industrial history. This is a valuable asset to anyone wishing to best utilize what is admittedly a very specialized cinematic history:

"The rapid growth and immense popularity of movie industry coincided with the influx of East-European Jews whose values, talents, and achievements permanently altered American society. Clearly both Jews and film production existed in America before the early twentieth century, but nothing even hinted at the media revolution that was to result from the combination of Jews and films." (9)

Blacks in Films by Jim Pines (London: Studio Vista, 1975): This is another work which analyzes a specialized cinematic span, beginning with the silent era and ending with blaxploitation films of the mid-1970s. Pines' textual analyses are particularly lucid and incisive. He provides some historical context in instances where it impacts film content (i.e., NAACP protests surrounding BIRTH OF A NATION and GONE WITH THE WIND). The author's arguments address rigid stereotypical depictions and their permutations. This book takes on some of the most extreme examples of racist stereotypes and reactions against them. Note the following excerpt, which addresses the advent of sound technology within the context of "negative" black filmic content:

"Hence, when the motion picture industry finally decided to revolutionize the whole framework of film in the late twenties through the mass-application of sound technology, the form and content of black racial characters and images was at its lowest, most derogatory level, although as such, fantastically popular." (14)

Pines also contextualizes black film images within the larger Hollywood framework of screen content. An example of this is Pine's description of blaxploitation films in terms of their uneasy relationship to the conventional Hollywood gangster film:

"More 'exciting' pictures...are variants of the gangster idiom which derive their impact from their distinct pseudo-ethnic flavour, which is often uncompromising as far as white audiences are concerned. These films especially have contributed to the new racial hero-types, i.e. gangster/underworld types as modern heroes, including women gang-smashers, black 'dicks' and Kung-Fu/ Karate types, pimps, slick male whores and so on. Despite their variety of characters and situations, however, the main ingredients that make up these portrayals remain fairly uniform throughout." (123-4)

Here, the author analyzes a historically degraded genre in terms of the elements working within it in order to better comprehend its distinct popularity and appeal.

American-Jewish Filmmakers: Traditions and Trends by David Desser and Lester Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993): These authors take as their focus the Jewish image in mainstream/Hollywood film. The films of four filmmakers (Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Sidney Lumet and Paul Mazursky) are positioned as representative of issues and concerns which typify a generation of U.S. Jews:

"We can conceptualize, indeed define, the cultural life shared by these directors by recourse to a linked set of issues. No single issue sufficiently defines American Jews, but taken together they constitute a magnificent mosaic of American-Jewish life over the last four decades. Enough commonalities, clear experiences, and tendencies exist to characterize this variegated life. Highlighting the parameters of this shared experience thus provides a perspective from which to view the films of these directors and appreciate how they integrate their Jewishness, their experiences as Jews in America, into their films...Such a view should not diminish individual artistry...Yet these important films clearly and significantly speak to the situation of contemporary Jews." (22)

Through a thematic examination of each director's films, Desser and Friedman attempt to present a "range of shared experiences" inherent in American-Jewish life. The authors contextualize the films of Allen, Brooks, Lumet and Mazursky in terms of similar generational influences and backgrounds. They also assert that because these filmmakers often work with the same cast and production crews and generally oversee most aspects of the productions, therefore, they qualify as "true auteurs" — suggesting a particular unity to their bodies of work. Not only do the authors make the argument that this grouping of filmmakers are auteurs, but auteurs with a particularly Jewish sensibility or consciousness drawn to specific issues and themes:

"...because the Jewish experience in America encompasses unique qualities, we should expect these directors to manifest something that can be accurately described as a Jewish sensibility, a particular bent of mind that attracts them to certain issues and themes and a perspective that invigorates their films with a sensitivity that grows out of their Jewishness." (32)

This book works best when discussing ethnically Jewish readings of individual films. In the context of the internal coherence of particular films, the authors are adept at making a convincing argument of a specifically American-Jewish ethnic sensibility and/or convergence of themes. However, the book is less persuasive when attempting to establish a strong connection between four very different artistic sensibilities regardless of the presence of some similar themes and motifs. The very last section of the book briefly discusses the careers of several other influential American-Jewish filmmakers who don't fit quite so easily with the four filmmakers comprising this study. Though several of Elaine May's films are discussed, issues of gender as influences on her work and career are not substantively addressed. Additionally, other factors such as differentials in class and region among the filmmakers (like the West Coast's Steven Spielberg) are somewhat minimized in service of presenting a cohesive and ethnically unified narrative.

This particular study exemplifies a potentially empowering shift in the process of addressing ethnic representation by members of one's own ethnic group. Rather than concentrating on how outsiders portray a given ethnic group, one can focus on the dynamics within the group where change and dialogue can be more easily facilitated. Clearly, this approach is ideally suited for American-Jewish filmmakers,

who admittedly, have had a longer history (than other ethnic groups) of involvement in the production of Hollywood as well as independent motion pictures.

Redefining Black Film by Mark Reid (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): Instead of highlighting the careers of individual filmmakers as a way of discussing ethnic representation, Reid seeks to address black independent film production as well as "three different genres of black-oriented films controlled by whites" — the "African-American comedy film," "Family film," and "Black action film." Reid's organizes much of his critical methodology around the concepts originating from traditional venues of American race humor—namely, the minstrel show. He introduces the terms "blackface minstrelsy," "hybrid minstrelsy," and "satiric hybrid minstrelsy" in his discussion of the African-American comedy film. The author takes great care to note historical transitions among these subtypes within larger generic categories as well as to consider both the sites of production and reception of the motion pictures under discussion.

Specifically, "blackface minstrelsy" involves the perpetration of racial stereotypes mainly by whites:

"The minstrel comics objectified African-American oral traditions, physiognomy, dress, dance, and song. By masquerading in blackface, whites objectified African-American life experiences. From the viewpoint of an assimilative gaze, black-face minstrelsy allows whites to take pleasure in the 'hostile or sexual aggressiveness' of blacks while the white race escapes the harm that such dramas assign to the African-American community." (19-20)

In contrast, "hybrid minstrelsy" and "satiric hybrid minstrelsy" are performed exclusively by blacks:

"The term hybrid minstrelsy describes a second style of black-oriented humor. This comic type borrows some of its aura and visual qualities — such as burnt-cork makeup, malapropisms, shabby dress, and coon and mammy caricatures — from white-oriented minstrel humor... This hybrid humor resulted from the fact that black and white writers as well as black performers concentrated on satisfying the expectations of white audiences, which demanded a non-threatening African-American humor." (23)

"Satiric hybrid minstrelsy," in the author's words, "is a negotiated form of hybrid minstrelsy and shares the racially tendentious structure of the blackface and hybrid minstrel forms":

"...satiric hybrid minstrelsy, was popularized during the civil rights movement by such African-American comedians as Jackie "Moms" Mabley, Dick Gregory, Godfrey Cambridge, and Flip Wilson... unlike hybrid minstrelsy, satiric hybrid minstrelsy also appealed to a black audience who negotiated the contents and laughed with, and sometimes at, themselves as well as white Americans. Both whites and blacks tended to be entertained by the same jokes, which ridiculed contemporary racial and social inequities." (34)

Though this subtype allows black and white audiences to attain a kind of unity in reception, Reid finds it suspect:

"In the satiric hybrid minstrel film, the process of unification produces an uninventive rebellion, because the racial dualism that structures blackface and hybrid comedy equally determines the structure of satiric hybrid minstrelsy." (35)

While limiting himself to three classifications (vaguely reminiscent of Donald Bogle's strict list of character subtypes) and a set number of generic categories, Reid manages not only to contextualize black films (independent and Hollywood) within their historical periods but also to create a continuity and specifically African-American context for the analysis of the films. He positions filmic black representation as an outgrowth of early minstrel shows and contextualizes his generic choices (comedy, family, action films) around the tendencies of early black independent films. This represents a subtle but significant shift in writing about ethnic representation; here, in some sense the ethnic group's filmmaking activity sets the agenda and parameters of the discussion. Indeed, Reid's characterization of the 1970s black independent filmmaking movement as renewing the tradition of black independent film production suggests a historical continuity which implies the nascent but ever-present power of African Americans to produce images alternative to mainstream ones.

This book also takes on the perpetuation of racist and sexist images in black independent film. It is notable that Reid devotes separate chapters to "Black Feminism and the Independent Film" and "Male-Directed New Black Independent Cinema" as well as taking critical stands against the homophobia and sexism in the films of successful black male directors like Spike Lee. Reid doesn't resist the multiplicity of forces at work in the "modes of film production and of black spectatorship," but instead he encourages a more acute awareness of the dynamics of these forces:

"This study has shown when, how, and why certain black films imitate or resist dominant representations of race and gender. It also describes the agential processes by which black films and their audiences resist, appropriate, or assimilate racist and misogynist ideas that surround and, at times, consume them." (136)

Framing Blackness by Ed Guerrero (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993): Guerrero structures his arguments around potent, often painful, historical themes in the African-American experience which serve as dominant motifs in black filmic representation. Further, Guerrero limits his study to a select number of popular Hollywood films in order to address their significant ideological and aesthetic influences on other films as well as larger societal racial perceptions:

"*Framing Blackness* is not intended to be a complete or linear history of the black presence in the American commercial narrative cinema. Moreover, this discourse tends to focus on the construction of blackness in the most popular, 'hit' vehicles of commercial cinema for two reasons. First, Hollywood has played a significant, if colonizing, role in shaping all other narrative cinema languages and formal conventions,

and its most successful features are arguably its most influential in this regard. Second, in these films we can most readily see both the industry's ideological power to shape the audience's conceptions of race and its mediation of the audience's racial and social attitudes." (4-5)

Guerrero states his "interpretative strategy" as drawing on several "schools of thought" such as "Althusserian readings of culture, Freudian psychoanalysis, narratology, and semiotics." Indeed, his readings of individual films and thematic connections between films not often coupled (such as *BIRTH OF A NATION* and *MANDINGO*) as well as reflections on box office hits that comment on African-American representation tangentially or by omission (such as *ROCKY* and *STAR WARS*) are both unique and persuasive. The book discusses the depiction of slavery and the slave in Chapter 1 and "contemporary sedimentations of slavery motif" as well as depictions of "blackness and racial otherness" in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 addresses the impact of the civil rights movement on films of the 1960s and also Blaxploitation films of the 1970s. The fourth chapter covers films of the 1980s from a recuperative and defensive (against a Hollywood backlash) perspective, while the final chapter heralds recent films of the 1990s as potentially invigorating and new.

Like Mark Reid, Ed Guerrero ends his book with a discussion of black independent filmmakers. However, his discussion of this diverse group (Spike Lee, Bill Duke, Julie Dash, Charles Burnett, et al.) uniformly valorizes them because they oppose the very system he so rigorously works to deconstruct. His analyses tend to confront issues that lead to a prescriptive call for a new African-American cinema which counters the historically denigrating and subordinating images generated from the dominant commercial filmmaking system. Yet, his perspective always includes a commercial and economic component:

"...the black filmmaker must struggle to depict the truth about black life in America while being inextricably tied to the commercialized sensibilities of a mass audience that is for the most part struggling to deny or avoid the full meaning of that truth." (168)

ANTHOLOGIES

Chicanos and Film: Representation and Resistance edited by Chon A. Noriega (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): In his introduction, Noriega describes this book as

"an attempt to respond to recent developments in three related areas: the representation of Chicanos and Chicanas in Hollywood and the Mexican cinema; the continued growth and diversification of a Chicano countercinema; and the emergence of Chicano film criticism as a distinct subfield within both Chicano and film studies" (xi).

More specifically Noriega describes the organization and content of the anthology:

"Part One, 'Representation and Resistance,' examines Chicano representation in the American and Mexican cinema in terms of stereotypes, resistance, and participation, as well as historical developments in film narrative and ethnic discourse. Part Two, 'Critical

Issues in Chicano Cinema,' examines Chicano-produced film and video in terms of production, distribution, signification, and reception. Part Three, 'Manifestos and Testimonials,' reprints the seminal Chicano film manifestos of the 1970s, in which Chicano cinema was envisioned as both an extension of the Chicano civil rights movement and New Latin American Cinema." (xiv)

Text-based analyses, industrial histories, genre study and issues of stereotyping (from within and outside the ethnic group) are rigorously provided from a Chicano perspective. The overall impact of these essays is to consolidate a myriad of issues in film studies under a new umbrella, that of "Chicano cinema"-a term which includes an extremely diverse group of films across an extended historical period. One looks forward not only to more films by Chicano filmmakers (independent or Hollywood-based) but also more focused studies of the Chicano presence in well-established genres (such as the Western) that would significantly inflect any contemporary readings of "classic" films.

Moving The Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts edited by Russell Leong (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Visual Communications, Southern California Asian American Studies Central, 1991): Editor Leong's introduction well outlines this collaborative work's parameters:

"*Moving the Image* is the first effort to define independent Asian Pacific American media arts and to describe its development from 1970 to 1990. In conceiving the book, we sought to carry into the future the momentum, the movement, and the energies unleashed at the birth of independent Asian American media. The words, essays, and statements by the fifty media and cultural workers in this book challenge, celebrate, and contradict each other. Read together, these writings convey a sense of how Asian and Pacific Americans have viewed themselves during the past twenty years, and have created film, video and radio alternatives to Hollywood portrayals and mass media images." (xi)

Taking on diverse and often conflictual issues, this volume offers a chorus of voices which are organized not according to a preordained master narrative, but rather an alternative ordering motivated by a collective (yet individually specific) ethnic field of identity of various writer/artists:

"*Moving the Image* is not fixed by formula, plotted to Hollywood timeframes, or arranged according to academic or Asian American Studies schemas. Instead, we developed the book as an 'open work,' which 'assumes different shapes depending on the angle from which it is viewed.' Each chapter begins with quotations, epigrams, poetry, or prose fragments by Asian and Pacific writers and visionaries. These form active responses to life as it has been seen, lived, and questioned... These fragments hint at richer and complex origins, yet freshly juxtaposed they form a 'free-floating montage' of memory." (xiii)

While not addressing issues of ethnic representation exclusively through the established theoretical and critical methodologies in contemporary film studies, socio-political contexts, individual career achievements (both independent and Hollywood based), personal testimonials, and manifestos all combine to create a

rich mosaic of artistic/personal experience. Here the filmmakers/artists represent themselves along with addressing the ethnic representation of their respective groups. The foregrounding of personal philosophies intimately links issues of representation with people's lived experiences outside the world of films and filmmaking. The result is a particularly discerning, complex and often intensely emotional compilation which provides the opposite of a distant overview. Rather, it offers an examination that encompasses a vast array of historical/personal/professional experiences with penetrating insight.

Black American Cinema edited by Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993): Diawara introduces the collection of essays as providing an examination of black American cinema divided into two broad areas-black aesthetics and black spectatorship:

"Contributors to the first part derive a Black film aesthetic by focusing on the Black artist, his or her representation of the Black imaginary, and his or her place within broader communities...The modes of existence of a Black film culture are linked to Black institutions, nationalist versus integrationist politics, Black American literature and literary criticism, and issues of realism in representation. Contributors to the second part address the thorny issue of film spectatorship. In doing so, they bring into view another dimension of the Black film experience, one encompassing a history of film reception, generic expectations, patterns of spectatorial identification, and the possibility of political resistance." (ix)

Black independent film from 1930s to the 1990s as well as Hollywood productions are analyzed in this collection. Oscar Micheaux and Spike Lee tend to be the two focal points of discussion for the contributors to the first section on black aesthetics. This tendency reveals the intense interest of black theoreticians to link the past and present with the idea of shaping a future black cinema. The book's second section connects past traditions to the present from the position of reception, leaving no site of filmmaking uncontested:

"...the topic of Black film aesthetics cannot be divorced from the productive efforts of the spectator who works with and upon the film image. Essays in the second part of the volume confront the question of Black spectatorship head on. If, as Ed Guerrero proposes, the image of Blacks on screen appears in the 'protective custody' of Hollywood, perhaps other dimensions to the representation of Black life can be reclaimed at the site of reception". (x)

This compilation offers a wide range of approaches and perspectives that, while not necessarily speaking to one another, provides a useful resource for current theoretical thought on black American film. While not sharply focused on any one issue or theoretical approach, this collection of essays displays a breadth of interests that indicate how multifaceted and complex the subject of African-American cinema can be. Clearly, this approach to ethnic film representation indicates a marked evolution from the more one-dimensional "image" studies of the 1970s. It is also notable that the anthology or compilation format easily allows a diverse group of authors (from Jane Gaines and Richard Dyer to Amiri Baraka and bell hooks) to address the specific area of cinematic ethnic representation for

critical inquiry.

Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema edited by Lester Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991): In his introduction, Friedman notes the evolution of writing on ethnic representation in U.S. film:

"Writing about images was certainly a necessary and vitally important first step in sensitizing our colleagues, as well as the general public, about the pervasiveness of ethnic issues in the cinema. Yet such explorations inevitably focus on value-laden judgments of authenticity and elusive concepts of realism." (2)

He offers these essays as an antidote to the earliest trends:

"This anthology represents the first attempt to encourage thinking and research about ethnic issues and the American cinema in...an introduction of critical theories and methodologies. It seeks to build some bridges without totally ignoring the walls. These essays, therefore, explore the concept of ethnicity not only as it narrowly relates to various nationalities, colors, and religions, but also as it intersects with different ways of perceiving the world. Such a broad conception of ethnicity rests on a belief that all categories of classification represent a cultural construction; it also recognizes that all modes of interpretation are, in and of themselves, ideological positions that seek to order our interpretations of experiences, both inside and outside the text, via a predetermined, hierarchical spectrum of responses that runs from good to bad, from higher to lower, from correct to incorrect, from acceptable to invalid." (6)

This anthology is divided into two parts. The first stresses incorporating issues of ethnic representation with more traditional discourses in cinema studies, while the second explores broader areas of critical thinking which frequently inflect works about ethnicity and ethnic representation:

"Essays in the first part examine how incorporating ethnicity into even the most traditional modes of film analysis — historical, auteurist, genre — forces us to reconsider, and ultimately to reformulate, the elements we include and those we ignore when employing these methodologies...Essays in the second part relate broad areas of critical thought — cultural studies, ethnography, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, feminism, class studies — to ethnicity, analyzing where each intersects and how each amplifies the other." (6)

One of the most obvious advantages of a collection such as this is the inclusion of essays which would have difficulty fitting into more thematically defined anthologies. The only criteria for this work is the subject of ethnicity and its representation in American film. This compilation of articles on the filmic representations of African-Americans, Hispanics! Latinos, Asians, Jews, as well as the underwritten sphere of interethnic "role-playing" is presented as a coherent and formidable area of critical inquiry. Hopefully, volumes such as *Unspeakable Images* will function to spark and sustain the growing interest in issues of ethnic/class/religious representation in cinema studies, rather than discourage

more focused studies of greater length and complexity. This volume provides a forum for incisive, yet not easily classifiable, essays which not only stand on their own but prompt further debate and/or introduce new paths of inquiry.

OTHER WORKS

Romance and the "Yellow Peril" by Gina Marchetti (University of California Press, 1993): This book stands as an example of writing not only on Asian representation in Hollywood films but on a particular thematic trope within these depictions — that of interracial romantic/sexual relationships. This work "dissects Hollywood's Asia" through an examination of "cinematic depictions of interracial sexuality":

"Rather than look at individual characters or survey the history of Asians in film, the focus here is on the way in which narratives featuring Asian-Caucasian sexual liaisons work ideologically to uphold and sometimes subvert culturally accepted notions of nation, class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation." (1)

Marchetti investigates specific paradigms such as "the rape fantasy," "white knights in Hong Kong," "Japanese war brides," and "the geisha masquerade" to illustrate her arguments. The author finds in the persistence of these paradigms a symptom of larger ideological power struggles:

"...these fantasies tend to link together national-cultural and personal fears, so that the rape of the white woman becomes a metaphor for the threat posed to Western culture as well as a rationalization for Euroamerican imperial ventures in Asia." (3)

The book manages convincingly to bridge films from far-separated time periods specifically in terms of their broader patterns of Eastern-Western cultural conflicts. The readings of the films are often inflected by both feminist and cultural studies perspectives. However, in one instance, Marchetti incorporates Donald Bogle's "tragic mulatto" stereotype term into Hollywood's Eurasian archetype:

"Like the Hollywood mulattoes, Eurasian characters' tragedy lies in their desire to be accepted into white society and to put aside their vilified racial heritage...However, the possibility that a mixed-race character could "pass" for white in a society that defines itself in terms of absolute boundaries between the races represents a significant threat. In Hollywood, this threat surfaces in narratives that deal with Eurasian characters' sexual involvement with Caucasian characters, who may or may not know about their lovers' racial background." (69)

Marchetti's work is particularly involving and absorbing precisely because she works from the broadest issues (East-West cultural influences and power dynamics) to the functioning of the most specific character types (the Eurasian) in Hollywood films. In this way, the Asian-Caucasian cinematic sexual motif of Hollywood is revealed to contain a great deal more than romantic/exotic escapism.

Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism edited by Diane Carson, Linda Dittmars, and Janice Welch (University of Minnesota Press, 1994): Issues of ethnic cinematic representation have been addressed in feminist film writing to a certain

degree. One of the most influential of such essays is included in this feminist film theory anthology: "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory" by Jane Gaines analyzes feminist film theory's limitations when dealing with race and gender issues:

"I will argue, the psychoanalytic model works to block out considerations that assume a different configuration, so that, for instance, the Freudian-Lacanian scenario can eclipse the scenario of race-gender relations in African-American history, since the two accounts of sexuality are fundamentally incongruous. The danger here is that when we use a psychoanalytic model to explain black family relations we force an erroneous universalization and inadvertently reaffirm white middle-class norms."

"By taking gender as its starting point in the analysis of oppression, feminist theory helps to reinforce white middle-class values, and to the extent that it works to keep women from seeing other structures of oppression, it functions ideologically." (177)

Gaines' assertions and analysis risk criticism but provide an invaluable contribution to feminist film theory. Every theoretical approach has virtues and limitations. Only through addressing and interrogating these can a higher level of insight be achieved. Also Gaines' essay cites writings by black feminists along with other writings in the ethnic studies field, which provides a multilayered foundation on which to read classical Hollywood texts.

CONCLUSION

This survey of writing on cinematic representation of ethnic groups indicates a clear shift over the past twenty or so years. Beginning with discrete studies on specific ethnic groups which addressed "negative" Hollywood stereotypes, we have moved to the more recent production of collective volumes. These incorporate not only different authors, but often consider a diverse and growing number of groups as their subject matter. In this way, the sphere of ethnic cinematic representation itself seems to have evolved for scholars into a more inclusive, yet oddly more consistent and persistent area of inquiry and resistance.

Richard Dyer's introduction to his collection of essays, *The Matter of Images* (New York: Routledge, 1993) continues and elaborates on this larger question of cinematic representation by including so-called "dominant" groups: he calls attention to and critically interrogates filmic images of straight men and "whites." His work completes the circle by defining marginalized groups not only through a rigorous investigation of their peripheral space in relation to the dominant center, but by strategically deconstructing this assumed "center" or the mainstream. In this way, Dyer challenges the nature of mainstream representation and its implicit norms by studying it and placing its norms into serious question:

"The groupings that have tended not to get addressed in 'images of work, however, are those with most access to power: men, whites, heterosexuals, the able-bodied. The problem with not addressing them as such is that they then function as simply the human norm, without specificity and thus without a specifiable relation to power...Such work,

adumbrated in a couple of pieces here, seeks to make normality strange, that is, visible and specific. This must not imply, however, an equivalence between such images and those of women and other oppressed groupings. The project of making normality strange and thus ultimately decentring it must not seem to say that this has already taken place, that now masculinity, whiteness, heterosexuality and ablebodiedness are just images of identity alongside all others. That may be the point we wish to reach but we are not there yet. As in all others issues of representation, we must not leave the matter of power out of account any more than the matter of representation itself." (4)

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JUMP CUT

A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA

Harry Shearer interview Out through the in door

by John O'Kane

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Harry Shearer is certainly one of LA's most versatile talents. Actor, scriptwriter, producer, journalist, essayist, comedian, political satirist: he realizes these vocations along the spectrum from fringe to mainstream. What lingers for me from inspections of this activity and a series of confrontive conversations with Harry is a question as to whether he merely dabbles in the fringe as a means for occasional self expression, off-handed forays which serve to assure him that the commercial arts are really where it's at after all; or if he makes a living in the mainstream while entertaining fantasies of changing if not subverting it, extending a more complex version of funny life throughout all the cultural industries. Or does he offer testimony that these kinds of worries have largely passed by the way, becoming so much noisy irrelevance when commercial dependencies have made fringe and center near mirror images of one another? Harry certainly maintains an ambiguity which is far from detrimental to cultural expression. In fact, his peculiar positioning as a cross-cultural media sage may finally foster some uniquely provocative gesturings which escape him.

My first encounter with Harry Shearer was through the satirical rock documentary — the "Rockumentary — "THIS IS SPINAL TAP (1982), an irreverent commentary on MONTEREY POP, GIMME SHELTER, THE LAST WALTZ and others from the imaginary rock canon. Harry was a major force in this shattered illusion of documentary truth, playing Derek Smalls, the "cucumber man," the bass player for the fictional band SPINAL TAP which brought suspicion to bear on rock culture and its manufacture of stardom and authenticities. But such a mocking suspicion has been a mainstay throughout a series of seasoned entertainings which first emerged in the late 60s — intersecting with a revolting generation's irreverences — in a variety of experimental radio formats around LA that continued well into the 70s.

Most notable was Shearer's contribution to *The Credibility Gap*, an alternative radio show in LA that lasted until the mid-70s. This show's timeliness and tone of anti-establishment mockery bore a striking similarity to *Saturday Night Live*, which started in 1975. Both were a breath of fresh air in the comedy world: the one in the aesthetics of radio, the other through an expanded television space outside prime time. They were adventures in a market opened up by baby-booming sacrilege in

receivership over the fates of 60s radicalism, and the shows expressed a pent-up demand for intelligent comedy-with-a-punch. This was at a time when "alternative" would begin to fade as a viable expression, to be increasingly overcome by mainstreaming into the 80s and beyond. Harry was a member of *Saturday Night Live* during the late 70s, a second generation arrival, and for a short time in the mid-80s. The comic skits innovated by these first wave of satirizers focused on taboo and neglected topics, and the show presented them in ways stylistically alien to the television fare engulfing the prime time image consumer. It was spiritually alive and sufficiently off-center to captivate a marginal audience. It had a work-in-progress aura that defied slickly crafted spectacle. It is this early rawness, the repeated simulations of realism and liveness, that most closely conjures Harry's "intelligent" comedy, though he himself sees the entire legacy as only a variation on the same trendy ploy to get and keep an audience. The show stopped short of mature political satire through a look at the languages of social difference, letting entertainment formulae reign, which limit agendas and terms for discussion while recycling stars and trends. Perhaps this is why Harry spouts most of his wisdom through the radio waves of KCRW in Santa Monica, an "alternative" outlet linked to a national audience that allows him considerable freedom of expression for a continuous hour a week. His comic vision radiates throughout the land as an intelligent simulation of risk-taking that contests the shrinkage of comic frontiers. His satire isn't always obviously funny.

Harry's risk-taking may at times threaten the system or merely gloss it over with a few fashionable disruptions. The radio slot (titled "Le Show" and known as "Hour of Power" and "Voice of America" in the early moments of 1983) is an eclectic stew ready to be consumed by any one market segment attentive to this or that style. This hardly means it has an absence of content. Alive to the productive associations with that rawness investing his earlier work in *Saturday Night Live* and *The Credibility Gap*, Shearer takes on the worthy topics of the contemporary world with hilarity and hip deconstruction, sparing few poses or ideological jockeyings. During any one week the show offers a smorgasbord of social, political and cultural consumables representing some facet of the newsworthy events from the week just ended. This diverse fare simulates an exercise in maximum openness and ironic suggestion, helped along by Shearer's frequent use of an offbeat montage principle where we find ourselves quickly leaving the spaces of one commentary or portrayal to enter another. Often the transitions are patched together with an eclectic mix of traditional, popular and experimental music from Harry's own personal collection, which enhances the openness and is high on mood generation (effects that are entirely accidental according to Harry).

The regular offerings of "Le Show" include the following:

- a raw explosion of opinion on one of the major events or sensibilities of the day, which usually opens the program; skits which dramatize, often by mixing fiction and reporting/ documentary, current political events deserving of ridicule; the recreation of hypothetical personal dynamics between political actors behind the scenes in relation to recent public developments, especially those at the White House; an assessment of the advertising world in a regular segment called "Reading the Trades," constructed interviews with prominent personalities played by Harry himself; biographical musings erupting from time to time which amplify recent details and experiences in his

- life to be merged with public concerns;
- and the interpretation of emerging lifestyles, usually those manufactured in Southern California, which often occurs by reading their representations through other media, particularly the daily newspapers (there's a striking resemblance at times in these readings to what Paper Tiger Television has accomplished with a variety of media).

One thing this surely demonstrates is Harry's amazing facility with the radio medium. He is known for his ability to recreate voices and does it often in the show, needed where the visual component is lacking and various sound effects serve to compensate (Harry's current work with *The Simpsons* is therefore quite consistent with where he's been). It is tempting to try to compare much of this one-hour entertainment package to what has become the norm for commercial media of all sorts: the frenetic pacing of image flows, the refusal to linger long on one representation for fear of instilling a capacity to read through and out of the illusions that keep the (not always benign) contents at bay. Where the excessive artifice and bogus jump cutting in advertising and commercial media are a ruse that privileges style over a vanishing content, Harry's constructions add up to a more sophisticated use of the entertainment aesthetic. The sometimes quick cuts in "Le Show" are countered by the much more prominent use of lengthy skits and portrayals where everything, including his own conscious input, is framed, mocked, and up for grabs on the way to exposing the vacuity of events and personalities in virtually every facet of public life.

If Shearer's mastery of the put-down is not gonzo radio in the best fashion of Thompson, Wolfe or Mailer in the realm of the written word, it is surely far from being the worst that entertainment (he insists that he is primarily an entertainer) can offer. It remains funny, at least as much as skits showing the Pranksters flitting from one elusive caricature of counter-American Dream to another. But then a journalistic project of Shearer's, writing columns for the *LA Tunes Magazine* (compiled in book form as *Man Bites Town* in '93) captures this same spirit in the print medium, which nurtured some of his early work. No medium or institutional support system can hold Harry back. His anything-goes satire can blossom anywhere it is given a chance to perform, and this is perhaps what allows it to circulate in so many scenes. The question is whether his end-of-ideology deconstruction, which spares nothing in a riot of irreverence, can get him out through the in door!

O' Kane: What led to the type of creativity reflected in *Le Show*? You mentioned you were a child actor. What specifically took you in the direction of this kind of satirical comedy?

Shearer: I was a child actor. Then I quit the business, went to college very young, got out very young, spent a year of graduate school at Harvard.

O'Kane: When was this?

Shearer: This was the mid-60s. I was writing for *Newsweek* during this time, both here and in Boston when I was going to Harvard. I spent a year working at the State Legislature in Sacramento, two years teaching school in Compton. Then I got back in the business. I joined a group that was doing satirical radio shows

everyday, three ten-minute shows a day when we started out. They were kind of mock news shows, and they actually were news shows; we were in the news department at the station. And often the second or third story would bounce into a sketch or piece of music about the story. This was at KRLA first, and then it went to the station which is now KROQ. We were on the air for three years every day. That's why I laugh when people bring up the pressure of *Saturday Night Live*; we did three ten minute shows a day, with more demand for material than SNL ever exerted. And there were at most four of us.

This was in the late 60s/early 70s. That group stayed together until '76: it was called *The Credibility Gap*. We did live shows, a couple of record albums, some educational films.

I've run into people who'd seen our *Intro to Statistics* film in college. Bizarre, to be made to sit and watch that. When that group broke up, I was a creative consultant to a show called *Fernwood Tonight* with Martin Mull. It was Norman Lear's follow up to *Mary Hartman*. I also worked with Albert Brooks; I wrote his first movie for him with Monica Johnson, called *Real Life*. We did an album together. I started devising and producing a show for very early cable TV called *Likely Stories*, and then I co-wrote and co-produced a special for ABC with Rob Reiner and Chris Guest and Billy Crystal and Martin Mull and a bunch of other guys, called *The TV Show*; it lasted one episode. Then I went to New York.

O'Kane: Many people see you as a lefty, a progressive media critic. Have they misinterpreted the radio show? Is there more than one performing Harry Shearer? Do your intentions sometimes get twisted around and changed in the performance as public property? Perhaps your public persona is a contradictory one.

Shearer: Well, people can see me the way they like. The fact is if you do political humor, the tendency is for people on the left to feel you are speaking for them, grinding their axe. I've been really interested in not doing that. The most complaints I've gotten on the radio show have been, for example, when I've made fun of Jesse Jackson. The calls are calls of betrayal. I feel that as a comedy person I reserve the right to find whatever funniness I like. I don't do what I do to be part of a cause or movement or political structure or to persuade or convert. I do what I do to make people laugh. I started doing this kind of thing in the late 60s and early 70s, when a lot of the people who would show up were political. I was against the war and all that, but I didn't think it appropriate to mix comedy and politics. I couldn't turn around and make unbridled fun of Jerry Rubin or Tom Hayden, the things I tend to do.

O'Kane: You make fun of everybody. What I see you doing best is satirizing an idea, person or event in a way that makes us really think about things in a little depth. You are so good at showing how things need to be exposed, show us how things are phony, bring us into this whole process of image making, force us to look at them, unravel them a little better.

Shearer: We live in an age of the most elaborate and persuasive artifices that man has ever created. I'm lucky in that I know how a lot of this stuff is done, and I think it is important to keep reminding people how flat the walls really are around a lot of these things we see. One of the things that pleases me is the comments I get from people. Someone said they can't watch David Copperfield anymore, I spoiled it for

them. It's not so much screwing with the magic but the theatrical artifice that he uses surrounding his act. That's what I was pointing out, the wind machine, body suit, the posing, etc. A lot of what's funny in what is going on is that we get suckered into these over and over again because there are powerful machines at work to make us believe this stuff is real. And I like getting hold of these powerful machines and saying, in different ways, they are not real.

O'Kane: What strikes me about your skits is the effect they have on the way we look at the original, the prime time show, the personalities you parody and the stories, personal as well as media-generated news performances. The original and the parody seem to have different meanings after your operations. We go back to these shows and they seem different after we see your parody. And a re-viewing of, listening to your parody after this is also different, in the sense that the first run-through of your performance is sometimes just an initially funny experience. This is so, for me at least, because you can mimic the originals so well, show how they are composed, what they are made up of, but all as a simultaneous piece of entertainment to be enjoyed.

Shearer: Yes, some of my favorite stuff on the radio show is the exposure of behind the scenes at CBS. I just try to imagine how the news might be delivered. Rather may be standing up to deliver his newscast when he comes back from vacation, or whatever. I just try to present how these things are made and what people's emotional reactions to them might be, show the endless amount of time wasted thinking about things like that, the minutiae of their jobs, that take more time than the important things. There's no journalism that can get you into a room where Dan Rather is talking to Charles Kurrault in his hotel room in Beijing right after the Chinese Government pulled the plug. There's no journalist that can get you there and tell you what they might have been talking about. So, that's something I like to do. That's about the only ability I have, to take what I know to be reality and imagine the rest of it. I can't imagine alternate universes or genetically mutated life forms.

O'Kane: Do you think there is a compatibility with your performances and prime time? Would the content and format have to change? Don't prime time shows have certain bytes you have to conform to, certain time restrictions and visual taboos that amount to subtle censorship? People seem to be cut off a lot, stopped short of important revelations by the always looming commercial, diverted away from uncomfortable topics in clever ways toward meaningless babble.

Shearer: There are time slots you have to fit into, and you can't expect them to throw away their format for you. It's a specialized version of the entertainment aesthetic, a particular internalized clock they have, which is not the only clock existing in entertainment, but it is the one ascendant right flow. So you have to deliver what you do in those slots, and it does no good to bitch about them censoring you if you can't fit into that. That's the game, the deal. But I've been able to go to these places and do my thing, make people laugh who didn't go there to see me perform. To me the fact that I haven't had a lot of primetime exposure is not because what I do can't be seen or done there, it's because people who run prime time think this at the moment. This isn't necessarily a permanent condition.

The radio show has no strictures or rules. I make them up. It is my game. Nobody says anything to me. My show is on WGN in Chicago, a very large commercial

station. You can't get more mainstream, heartland mid-America than that. I've never had one complaint about content or anything else from them. That's my game. In prime time there's a different set of rules regarding keeping and maintaining an audience and about the pacing of a show. I pride myself in knowing enough about show business in being able to abide by their rules and still do what I want to do.

O'Kane: You must have some semblance of motivation for what you are up to. Do you just do what you really want and kind of work it all out of yourself with the finished product?

Shearer: Yeah, it's the only way not to lose yourself in the midst of this because, it's a cliché but it is true, if you lose touch with the thing that made you want to do this in the first place, then you're really lost. You've got no clue, no reference point. So the motivation when I'm writing and thinking something up is to amuse myself, and when I watch or hear it back to feel pleased in kinda getting it. These are the main goals. When someone comes up to me and says they can't look at Brokaw, David Copperfield or whoever again without having a new set of thoughts in their mind, that's great, wonderful. I love that, but I can't really say that that's the primary goal. That's the result of my achieving the primary goals, pleasing myself and succeeding in a certain way, in the same way I sense Magic Johnson is pleased when playing a basketball game. He seems to be trying to approximate in the real world — unlike many other players — a game which he imagines, an ideal realm mentally which he's trying to create in reality as a close approximation to that ideal game he sees. His goal is to do that. The cheers, admiration, championships, what follows from that is nice. But, like with Magic, it seems to me that when you boil it down, the basic goal is to try to get things to follow from the true source of inspiration.

O'Kane: Your vision feeds on other visions. I don't mean this negatively. You're like a scavenger. You position yourself in relation to a particular person, ideal, and...

Shearer: Everything is a matter of just observing human behavior. It's what everybody does. I just don't choose to build myself around observations of my family when I was a child, for example, which a lot of others do. Everything is observing human behavior in one way or another: that's the basis of comedy. There're certain kinds of human behavior I'm interested in — politics, sports, corporate life (feeling lucky not to be enmeshed in it, observing from the outside), the media, music. I just observe people in these worlds behaving, and then I try to draw out those things I think are funny and do the least amount of exaggeration necessary to have the audience respond the same way that I do. I don't necessarily see myself as making up funny things so much as finding funny things, separating out the non-funny, distilling the funny parts and using the tools to bring attention to the funny stuff. It's opposed to the run-of-the-mill comedy routine, a type of satire which tries to impose an outside sense of what is funny on a character and on a situation. Everybody's already funny. The difference between the civilian sense of humor occurs at the bar or at the office, telling this week's Leona Helmsley jokes, and the only difference between it and the professional sense of humor is that the civilian sense jokes about the easiest, hottest, the obvious missteps, goofups. This is no knock on the civilian sense, this is people's job. But the professional sense works

a little harder to see what's funny about a wider range of things.

O'Kane: By this "wider range" do you mean you want to be funny in more than one way simultaneously? Do you want to edit together the funny and the non-funny or painful while still being entertaining? Do you try to create a tripwire for the release of something you lack complete control over? Nobody could sit down and talk about the things you talk about in a serious vein. Everything you do testifies to the fact there's this absurdity out there that can't be described in a logical way, by simply saying, "this is absurd and this is why." It takes a comic or satirical intelligence to really drive it home. Politics is an attempt to do things in a serious causative way, and so it seems you could never fall into the trap of being that kind of person or critic. You are one step beyond that all the time.

Shearer: I don't know. This century has been full of people who have tried to blast their minds into some state where they could make the kinds of lunatic associations that modern life actually constructs on a day-to-day basis. It just seems to me that a certain kind of comedy offers me the best chance to approximate the way I see things in the world. It's a medium in which you can make those kinds of leaps. If you guess right, then you've gotten as close as you can to the way things actually are. Quite frankly, I think most people in comedy are incredibly serious people, in contrast to most of the people I know in politics who have absolutely wicked senses of humor. So it's all mixed up in everybody. I have experience in journalism and dabble in it from time to time; there are things I think are interesting about it as a way to approximate what goes on. I do a lot of reading and watching and listening. I try to approximate that reality comedically, recreate it comedically. I just think that's the way I find most useful in trying to say, "This is what this is like." And maybe this is the part we don't know about.

O'Kane: There's definitely a journalistic component to your show. One of the things I like about it most is that when you come on every week, there's usually some event that just happened which you are usually enraged by but always definitely taken by. You want to comment on it immediately. The telethon satire, the Iraqi War, scandals in the White House, there's always something. You get to something substantial very quickly about the nature of these seemingly obvious events, some of the ironies and contradictions of our whole media reality, reading between the lines the key points begging to be addressed all that week. You are often articulately enraged by these things. You are a brilliant reader of the press. Some of your readings remind me of what *Paper Tiger Television* has done with the mass media. And a lot of the time what you come up with in these moments isn't funny as such; it's like a breaking through of a vision, a commentary between the puns that lasts and diverts us into streams we hadn't noticed.

Shearer: One of the things comedy does for me is that it channels the anger I feel about things I see around me. We are barraged by information; we allow ourselves to be, I do. Enough input and you need some output; you need some reaction. You need to have a way of going, "Wait, let's cut through all this." It's my good fortune that I have a place to do that. The thing is, people often say to people who do what I do: Aren't there some subjects that are just too delicate or unpleasant or grim or frightening or whatever to try and make fun of? The fact is that if the fun you are making is trivializing or goofing, then yeah, there probably are. The thing is, there are a lot of people in comedy who don't really take comedy all that seriously. They

think comedy is a medium for the light, the goofy, the superficial, the nutty, and that if you want to talk about things that really concern you, what you really care about, then you have to go dramatic. Mr. Allen is the best example of that, Woody Allen. With a few exceptions, when he wants to talk about the things he really cares about, he has to go serious on you. It's because somewhere along the line he's not convinced that comedy is a substantial enough medium to support these heavy thoughts of his. For me, it's capable of supporting anything I want to put through it, so there's no subject I think can't be seen in this light.

O'Kane: When I first heard your show in 1985, I never really saw it as comedy. It was entertaining but it had more than just funny skits. I've always thought of you as someone who could use comedy to embrace a fresh vision of the world. This was mainly because of how you could mix things together in an interesting way. You go from the journalism to biting criticism, then you go to Frank Sinatra for a couple of minutes, then back to a Steely Dan song, then you shift gears again to a skit.

Shearer: In talking about the show's aesthetics, look how the media today are obsessed. I mean buy a copy of *Radio And Records* and look at the narrow frameworks into which radio has been slotted. There used to be a thing called Vaudeville (sounds like a speech), there used to be a thing called rock and roll. Now there's CHR and AOR, a dozen different variations, there's classic rock, oldies, there's formats and formulas. You can't play this music on that station, etc. There always has to be an appeal to the right demographics. They use these polls of pseudo-science to erect so many lines and barriers and formulas and pigeonholes. What I like to do is break 'em apart, beat 'em down, just go, "I'll do this and then that, and the Republic will stand nonetheless, and people will listen." People tend not to do this at home. I love to blur the line between journalism and a certain kind of comedy. I like the idea of trying to make people guess which part of it is real and which part is me making fun. That's why I sometimes produce things that sound very real, and I'll give you the illusion for a moment that you are listening to something real.

And the production techniques, there are certain things where the techniques are deliberately not that realistic. "Hellcats of the White House" was deliberately theatrical in style and production technique because I thought they, the Presidential family, lived a very theatrical existence inside their own heads. They were living movies, not reality but other people's fictions. In the "Backstage at CBS" stuff, I attempt to make sounds which make you believe you are actually in that room. Sometimes you actually do hear stuff that's real and I do try to blur that. It's a dangerous line to blur if there's somebody not as responsible (or irresponsible) as me doing it. Then you get something like *A Current Affair* or *Inside Edition* or all this pseudo-news on TV now. It's like they are blurring the line to entertainment. But entertainment's so shitty and the news is so shitty, who cares about the line? And it's just going to get worse.

O'Kane: But isn't that where the problem is, that people won't care about the line? Is this why you want to explode these categories? Is the mass media trying to dictate what they think people want or should want and end up missing the unique experience that needs to be expressed?

Shearer: They aren't trying to dictate; they're trying to find out in a way you cannot. This is the difference I have with people who have a conspiracy theory of the mass

media. They maintain that the mass media is trying to dictate, which is an evil kind of model. My feeling is that they are more engaged in a desperate attempt to kind of predict and find out using tools of pseudoscience, to protect themselves from the consequences of guessing wrong. If anything, it's pathetic as opposed to evil.

O'Kane: Not evil in intent, but what about the mass media's effects? In fact, you chronicle some of this in your shows. It couldn't all be that harmless, could it?

Shearer: I'm not saying any of this is harmless. I do think that the essential harm is narrowing choices. There's this frantic attempt to guess what the next hot thing will be, so in the nature of the way they do things, at any given moment of time they narrow the range of choices the public has. The essential harm is to sort of say that for the next year there'll be one kind of flower. This year's hot fruit is cantaloupe, and if you don't happen to like cantaloupe, if you are one of those people who likes apples, you have to wait till that becomes the hot fruit. You wouldn't put up with that in supermarkets, and it's equally insulting and demeaning at the entertainment and cultural level.

O'Kane: How do you see your "comedy" in relation to standup comedy? With the in-joke standup comedy routine, there seems to be a sense that, yeah, that's it. You tend to get it fairly quick, you either get it or you don't, and most will get it fairly quick. They understand, and you get a laugh, and it's over. With your routines there's something to get right away, but there's always something left over.

Sheafer: Stand-up is like the fast food of comedy, except for very few people who can orchestrate the timing of it, like Albert Brooks. He would delay the laugh; he had the patience and the confidence if need be to go quite a long time before...You can be entertaining people without having them laugh every ten seconds. That's not necessary...in the same way that fast food is not necessarily the best way to satisfy someone's nutritional needs, but it sure satisfies the needs of the company that provides it. Every ten-second-laugh formula cannot be the best way to entertain the audience, but it reaffirms the perennially insecure comedian's question, "Am I funny?" Yes! "Do they like me?" Yes! And so when somebody like Albert gets on stage and has the guts to go minutes without getting that feedback, and you see how much better and bigger and fuller and richer the laugh he gets in the end is, as opposed to the time-reflex laugh, you can see that stand-up has the potential to be more than that.

O'Kane: It's like the Improv or the other similar places around town where that comedy genre is working all the time. This is a lot different than what you are doing. Do you see yourself then in the tradition of a Lenny Bruce?

Shearer: No.

O'Kane: Paul Krassner kind of does.

Shearer: Paul does stand-up. I rarely get on a stage and stand there and say, look at this, look at that. I'm much more often in character, one way or another, which has nothing to do with what Lenny Bruce did.

O'Kane: He also had a hard time getting that immediate laugh. He was much more into assaulting audiences.

Shearer: He had a very aggressive approach to it, which I don't. I don't think audiences need to be assaulted with or confronted with... I grew up working on the Jack Benny show. I see myself working very comfortably within the confines of entertainment, and I don't think it takes an aggressive or assaultive tactic to say those confines aren't as narrow as people sometimes think they are. That's all. Lenny Bruce is a sort of radically unique talent, but basically as a member of the audience I resent being assaulted. I hate it when Andy Kaufman stands up there and tries to drive me as a member of the audience crazy by reading badly from William Faulkner for half an hour, and everybody in the room is going "SIT DOWN!" I don't find that entertaining. What did I do, I didn't toilet train him badly. All I did was walk into a club, pay some money and order some over-watered drinks and now this guy's assaulting me. I never agreed with that aesthetic. I don't think an audience is misguided or criminal in thinking that entertainment should somehow, on some level, be enjoyable. I think there's a weird offshoot of Lenny Bruce and certainly Lenny Bruce doesn't bear responsibility for it, but a lot of people see themselves following down that path. I don't include Paul Krassner because Paul is very funny and satisfying to watch.

O'Kane: Paul seems to be right in the tracks of Lenny Bruce in a lot of ways, though he's not as assaultive.

Shearer: Yeah, I think he is. He's the true inheritor. But a lot of people see this need to radically diverge from the values of entertainment, and often all they have to say is "Booh" to the audience. I don't think Andy Kaufman had anything interesting to say in terms of content; all he had to say was, "Look how much I can put you through and you'll still sit here." He's much more of a linear descendant of bad 60s experimental theater like where actors would run into the audience and make you smell their arm pits than of Lenny Bruce.

O'Kane: Coming from what you said before about the fact that what we have nowadays is a kind of whittling down of possibilities in the entertainment industry, less choice about creative possibilities in the nature of the things you do, etc., given that fact it's interesting that you can be doing what you do for so long and have such a wide following. It raises the question about, well, if there were the appropriate channels, someone with the clout who would take that chance to open up the system to a greater extent to have more of this kind of thing being done, this would be a worthwhile goal, a good. It's also interesting because perhaps people are really not that stupid and want something more substantial and "quality" and they aren't getting it because people from above are saying, well...

Shearer: Look, it boils down to this. When I was with *The Credibility Gap* we were doing stuff very much like what I'm doing now, topical satire, political, social, cultural. And we did this record album which we were proud of at the time and many feel it was one of the best comedy albums ever made, and this is fifteen years later and we are very happy with it, it was a nice piece of work. But people would come up to us and say, after a show or something, "You guys and Cheech and Chong are my two favorite comedy groups." Now, if you asked those people, "Do you like Cheech and Chong?" and left it at that, you could assume that their taste for comedy was for Cheech and Chong, or for that kind of comedy which is sort of a low, broad, low-common-denominator comedy. Everybody has a higher level of taste for that which is done in their field. Nowhere is it written that people's tastes

can't range over a very wide area. There's nothing to say that people at the very same time like the low and the broad and also something different. The assumption is made that because you like X, because we can rely upon you to like X, we'll only sell you X. We won't even bother to think about Y. It's a commercially safer bet. It has nothing to do with what's out there in the audience. As I say, it's unknowable.

O'Kane: Your performances and your comments at times almost seem different. Something you're doing on your show is literal and obvious, but there's also a dimension to it that almost escapes you. Getting back to its aesthetics again, going back and forth between these various modes of expression, playing with comedy mixed with drama, the mix of the journalistic, the different kinds of music, the play with history, so on and so forth, reading the trades, all these different mixes of expression say one thing and another at the same time. It seems to me the history of experimental artistic expression, way back to Dadaism and Surrealism, was always a mixed mode, like yours, to break up formulas and mix them together. And as a result there was always something greater than the sum of the parts.

Shearer: Absolutely. But what keeps it in the area of entertainment is that there has to be a literal text, a literal level to it. It can't all exist on a subtext with auras and emanations. There's a level for people who want things available on an immediately accessible level. That's definitely there. And then the other stuff too. I was just reading the introduction to *Paul Prudhonne's Cookbook* because I'm interested in doing that kind of cooking; he mentions using different kinds of pepper in his cooking, white, black, and red pepper, because they affect different parts of the tongue at different times. So there's an immediate taste, a later one, etc. Or with great Indian food, for example, which you rarely get to eat here. If you eat Indian food in England there's an immediate wave that hits you, there's a second wave of flavors, a third wave of flavors, there's a combination of each of those that adds up to another. You can just enjoy the surface of it or learn to pay attention to the other levels that are there too, and if you want to cook it, you have to pay attention to this. You can eat really spicy food and just say this is hot, or you can dig into those other flavors that are underneath. It's the same thing, you know. I put the other stuff in because there're a lot of things that I'm interested in saying. I'm not particularly interested in just saying, "Here's what I think, bam." I'm not particularly interested in saying things in a literal way. I don't even know in a lot of cases what I think about them. I just want to bounce off against them and see what happens.

O'Kane: What do you mean by "bounce off?" Do you do this subconsciously?

Shearer: I don't particularly have a program to advance in which all of these things fit. What they all have in common is that they somehow engage my curiosity and my interest, and I bounce off them in different ways and in some of them let the listener make the connection and piece it together.

O'Kane: Like when an experimental video maker puts together something that is very emotional and very visual and very suggestive in terms of sound, but they don't know why they did exactly what they did? It just kind of worked, an emotional statement of some kind. It seems that your show is edited in this way. It works; there's an emotional uplift and the mood of something happening, a flowing together of useful doses of music and commentary that somehow speaks for itself. You go just far enough with an essay or opinion about what's on your mind, not too

much that might bore the listener, telling him that it's just another public affairs rap so he might switch channels. There's a quick cut to some music that might be counter to that particular statement or feeling or tendency. People may be just getting to the point where their attention span is trailing off, and you give them something else, a relaxed, emotional moment to ease the brain cells. But it seems to work together. It's not just eclecticism.

Shearer: It's my sense of taste, my sense of how a show is made. That's where I would say with most confidence that I'm an entertainer because my sense of how things are paced is really derived from show business. It's why I submit that what I do can be done on prime time or network TV. I have a strong sense of how to pace a show that I've learned from the business. Those skills can be used on a wider range of material in terms of content and still be pleasing to a large audience.

O'Kane: How do you put the show together, the voices, etc.?

Shearer: Normally about Thursday or Friday, it starts occurring to me that I have no ideas for the show. I've gotten better at clipping things from newspapers (I'm an avid newspaper reader). There'll be quotes in my mind from the week, and I'll sort of refresh myself with a few of the TV "Week in Review" shows on Friday. Then, depending on what my schedule is, during the day Friday or that evening or sometime on Saturday, I'll force myself to go, "Okay, there's got to be a couple of things here. Write 'em," and I produce 'em.

The production is all done in this 8-track studio I have. When I started working by myself, it occurred to me that I'd never heard pieces where one person did dialogue with himself doing different voices which sounded real. And the reason was that the way people had done it up to that time didn't work very well. Normally they'd do, let's say, two voices, A and B, and so they'd lay down all of Mr. A's lines, leaving in their minds holes for Mr. B's lines; then they'd go back and do Mr. B's lines and fill in those holes. It doesn't work. It's not a good way of doing it because Mr. A has nothing to react to and Mr. B is trying to fill a hole rather than act. So I figured out a way of getting around that that allowed me as an actor to both hear each character and react to them as an actor would and to have as much time as I wanted to do each line, rather than fill a preset hole. It's a technique that also allows you, if you want to, to do it totally improvisationally as well.

O'Kane: Do you believe this incredible restriction of options and possibilities within the current entertainment and media scene bodes well for our supposedly democratic culture? Do you see yourself as countering these trends?

Shearer: The worst effect on our democracy is... I was at a conference for the Radio and Television News Directors Association on the subject of "zoo news." Morning zoos are popular morning radio programs where there's not only a disc jockey who's supposed to be funny but who drags in his weather person or his traffic person or his news person, and they all just joke around together. So it's a menagerie of voices as opposed to one guy. A lot of conventional broadcast news people were saying, "How can you retain credibility when you are telling jokes with the disc jockey and you turn around and do these stories?" And one guy at the conference says, "How do you choose the news items that you put in your broadcast?" "Oh, we are always doing research on our audience, focus groups to find out what news stories they want to hear." Now that strikes at the heart of a

democracy. You are supposed to be giving people information they need to make informed choices, yet you are asking them, "What information?" — information they don't have yet that they want to hear. You are taking what may be at the top of their mind that day, which may not be anything related to what they need to know to make an informed choice as a citizen. You're setting up this artificial feedback loop where you now are going to reinforce their choice, doing that purely for the purpose of making your news as entertaining as possible, which is your defined goal. That's harmful. There's no defense for it.

O'Kane: People are being manipulated, told what their real needs are?

Shearer: No, they're being asked what news they want to hear. It's the absolute opposite of manipulation. It's panderous.

O'Kane: It sounds like a penultimate democratic gesture! Giving people what they want.

Shearer: It sounds like a democratic gesture. But how do people know what news they want to know?

O'Kane: People know what they want in a sense. Consumers in a consumer culture have certain wants they can identify.

Shearer: But consumer wants are based on prior experience. You've tried X kinds of soaps or foods or other tangible goods, so you know from those past experiences that you might want more of this, and not more of that. Gee, I would like a soap that smells like linen instead of like lye. But the point I was making before about entertainment, you can't research a desire for information. Information is that which you do not yet know. How can you know what you do not want to know, something that you do not yet know? It's insane. You are right. It has the aura of being a democratic act, and it is a profoundly anti-democratic act.

O'Kane: Like the 900 number responses on *A Current Affair*, the answers are already implicit in the question and just regurgitate the obvious.

Shearer: It's just masturbating the audience.

O'Kane: So Harry Shearer gives the audience what they don't want wrapped up in something they do? Uses the restrictive, limited tools of mass entertainment against themselves, in ways that turn them into something else while staying entertainment, staying in phase enough with entertainment culture to keep your popularity but just out of phase enough with mainstream expectations to do something democratically different and stimulating?

Shearer: ...

Pacifica's WBAI

Free radio and the claims of community

by Jeff Land

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The Pacifica radio network remains, after 46 years, one of the more fascinating institutions of the post war counterculture. The first successful experiment in listener-sponsored radio, Berkeley's KPFA began as an idea of Lewis Hill and his allies in 1946 who envisioned a radio station which would promote pacifist awareness in the face of the looming Cold War. Concerned that the nonviolent movement which emerged from the carnage of the Second World War lacked public support, Hill, a conscientious objector during the war, wrote:

"The major job for those determined to see a pacific world in our time is to enter the region close to home, to speech through the newspapers on the street and over the radio stations — in short to identify principles of world understanding where they have direct import in familiar situations." (Hill, in Hopkins, 1983)

Pacifica was begun by persons whose humanistic, but not leftist politics, disdain for mass culture, and overall altruism led them to invent and then remain with the impoverished phenomenon of commercial-free radio. Most of the original personnel and many subsequent volunteers had technical skills which could have earned them a good wage in the world of corporate media. With ecumenical taste, the original broadcasters had a general sense what good radio sounded like — modeled heavily on the BBC. They innovated a form of broadcasting which would neither pander to nor berate their listeners, whom they imagined to be much like themselves: a liberal, cultured middle class who were sick of the insipid commercialism of the mass media. They synthesized their politics — a combination of Paine and Gandhi — and their aesthetics — Arnoldian modernism — with little problem. While the aesthetics and politics may have had no natural relation to each other, the two complemented each other in varying from the apolitical entertainment of commercial media.

KPFA, the first of the current five Pacifica stations, went on the air in April 1948 with the specific injunction to

"engage in any activity that shall contribute to a lasting understanding between nations and between the individuals of all nations, races,

creeds, and colors; to gather and disseminate information on the causes of conflict between any and all such groups." (Pacifica, 1946)

Hill's staunch pacifism was joined with an equally vehement attachment to the U.S. tradition of civil liberties and dissent. His radio network would consistently herald its freedoms under the First Amendment to challenge the emerging Cold War consensus, an audacious and indeed unprecedented stand for any of the broadcast media of the time. With its consistent engagement with political struggles of the post war world, Pacifica has invited alliances with nearly all the different transformatory movements of the past fifty years, from the Beats and Hipsters to the Weather Underground, from practitioners of holistic medicine to ACT-UP.

Because Pacifica situated itself not as a neutral observer but as an engaged participant within these movements, difficulties inevitably have arisen between providing an uncensored environment for individual expression and creativity, while at the same time enabling a large number of communities' and groups' access to the airwaves (which means abiding by the mandate of federal license requirements). The creative tension between promoting the radical transformation of society within a licensed, communally oriented institution has served to push Pacifica beyond being just a broadcast medium. At heart the network strives toward a synthesis which combines community and liberty. It has also pioneered a number of media innovations: the use FM broadcasting when almost no other broadcasters were interested in that channel, the transformation of talk- and call-in radio from a realm of fabricated candor into an uninhibited forum, and the creation of "underground" radio of the 60s and "community" media in the 70s. Here I wish to examine one of the most contentious epochs in Pacifica's legacy: the struggles at its New York outlet, WBAI, from the late 60s to the mid 70s, a period during which the station first saw tremendous growth and equally precipitous decline and turmoil.

KPFA's iconoclastic programming had led New York philanthropist Louis Schweitzer to donate the license of his commercial FM station, WBAI, to the Pacifica Foundation in 1959. (It is said that the first person Schweitzer spoke with hung up the phone believing him to be a crank.) In the late 50s and early 60s, the radicalism of Pacifica's broadcasts was based on its eclectic musical programming and educational and political series on issues rarely dealt with by the mainstream media — such as the Kennedy administration's subterfuge in pursuing a nuclear arms build-up. While these elements remain vital aspects of broadcasts now, the Vietnam War and upsurge of protest against it had an immense impact on the role played by the network's three stations during the 60s. WBAI's changing moniker indicates its transformations over the course of the 60s and 70s: "free speech radio" evolved into "free radio," finally "community radio." These name shifts indicate both the increasing spontaneity of numerous live programs as well as the utopian expectations these programs elicited from their audiences. This latter phenomenon in particular shaped WBAI's pioneering role in creating what we today call community radio.

WBAI's "free" or "live" radio programs during this period were arguably among the most innovative and explosive mass media ever broadcast in the United States. Yet, this remarkable achievement's blessing and curse was that its creative impulse derived in large measure from its symbiotic relation with listeners' expanding

opposition to the Vietnam War. As the Movement splintered, first ideologically in the late 60s, and then in practice with the end of the war, the imaginary connection unifying WBAI's audience underwent immense transformation. This change, however, does not represent the end of WBAI's story. After analyzing briefly the station's development in the 60s, I will trace how different "communities" or new social movements began participating in programming during and especially after the antiwar movement. This was the genesis of community radio.

As the vice president of WBAI's local board put it,

"Pacifica throughout its history had a way of bringing on many voices. But voices changed somewhat [in the late 60s], in the sense that it wasn't just a matter of expressing an opinion. They became in some instances angry voices and voices of communities *demanding* representation which they may not have had before" (Goodman, 1993).

Ultimately, the situation became intolerable, and the station went silent in the wake of a forty-five day strike in 1977.

COUNTERCULTURE

In New York City during the height of 60s social ferment, radio station WBAI played a central role in the vast counterculture. According to Larry Josephson, announcer, producer, station manager, and longtime member of the Pacifica family, WBAI "helped make the 60s what they were in New York. Everybody listened" (Josephson, 1993). Although precise audience figures are unreliable, in the late 60s perhaps 600,000 tuned in to 99.5 FM each week for "free radio": news, agitation, music, and live coverage of rallies, sit-ins, be-ins, happenings, protests, and street theater. This vast, passionately devoted community of listeners actively participated in all aspects of the station: in producing the shows as volunteers, in phoning in to the many call-in shows, and in attending events and demonstrations which the station promoted. By 1971 almost thirty thousand chose to sustain the station by paying ten to thirty dollars annually as subscribers.

To see how WBAI largely produced New York's counterculture, it is important to understand the role Bob Fass, host of "Radio Unnameable," now in its thirty-first year. (See Sand, 1994) In WBAI program guides from the early 60s, listeners were invited to tune in at 1:00 A.M. to "listen to the grass grow." (WBAI, 1964) What they heard on Fass' show was a completely unprecedented ("unnameable") melange of music, poetry, political analysis, stream of consciousness monologues, and phone calls from the audience — the cabal."

"It comes from the word 'horse.' Originally people who rode out at night with their identity concealed — even from each other to plot or plan something subversive. And I thought, 'That's it!'" (Fass, quoted in Sand, 1994)

With his instinctive psychological acumen, avuncular demeanor, and extraordinary dexterity on the soundboard, Fass was a master radio artisan. More important than his effortless skill using WBAI's archaic equipment was the ineffable immediacy of his show's tone. Fass' deep baritone, coached by years of theatrical training, was as an instrument perfectly suited to mediate the counterculture's utopian premises

and political strategizing. Within two years "Radio Unnameable's" nightly extravaganza emerged as one of New York's central loci where, like Berkeley's Sproul Plaza,

"spontaneous and collective political actions unfolded, new modes of communicating, decision-making, and analysis developed, as did solidarity and new kinds of caring, which in turn became the basis of future protest and changing notions of politics." (Breines, 1989)

The show had no format. Prior to Fass, WBAI simply signed off around midnight. When he volunteered to fill early a.m. hours, he could do whatever he pleased. (By 1967 his audience was so vast that the station needed to hire a personal secretary in order to keep up with the amount of mail and phone calls his show generated.) It is claimed that "Blowin' in the Wind" had its radio debut on "Radio Unnameable." Abbie Hoffman, another good friend, called in daily during recesses from the Chicago 8 Trial to give live updates of the court's progress after Pass began to augment his nightly broadcasts with a daytime program as well.

By the mid-60s "Radio Unnameable" had taken on a life of its own. For the emerging counterculture it had become

"more than a radio program: for the true believer it was a way of life, and Fass' devoted listeners followed him through his own changes in life style and politics." (*Post*, 1973, p.74)

During the same period, by all accounts the station had the most extensive and in-depth war coverage in the New York metropolitan area in spite of being the poorest major media outlet. In 1967 a reporter noted that the station owned "only four tape recorders, and half were in Vietnam." (Powell, nd)

WBAI, Louis Schweitzer's donation, which joined the Pacifica family in 1960 and stressed somewhat austere public affairs shows, jazz, folk, and classical music, poetry and drama, now hitched itself to the Moment's combustion to become something completely different. By 1967 a new generation of programmers — Larry Josephson, Steve Post, and somewhat later, Julius Lester — all began experimenting with "live radio." This unclassifiable bricolage would begin and end each broadcast day, waking WBAI's listeners in the morning whenever Josephson arrived to turn on the microphone and easing them to sleep when Pass received his show's last phone call, at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. One might accurately trace a line from Fass' boundless energy, engaged dialogue, and unconventional play lists to both Josephson's blend of humor, Jewish angst, and iconoclasm and to the Yippies' throwing \$1 bills onto the New York Stock Exchange.

But a more important and subtle effect permeated outward from "Radio Unnameable" into WBAI's overall soundscape and thence into the culture generally. Before broadcasters understood something called "community radio," WBAI's "free radio" and call-in programs were defining one version of what such a thing could be. While the experimental poetry and fora on such arcane topics as television in Africa still had slots in the broadcast day, the live phone-in shows with Post, Josephson, Fass, Lester, and others functioned as a fulcrum, raising audience expectations that the station would deliver more than education and entertainment. WBAI demonstrated that radio was uniquely situated to catalyze an immense,

ceaseless conversation about the possibilities of the new age. In the midst of the inchoate energies which the 60s and the Vietnam War had stirred up, the station assumed the immense responsibility of mediating the Movement's understanding of itself in the New York megalopolis.

The first major spectacle which Fass choreographed using his show was a "Fly-In" at Kennedy Airport, an event which set the stage for New York's first "Be-in" in Central Park a few months later. Pass spent the weeks of early 1967 inviting the "cabal" to venture to Kennedy Airport's international terminal on February 11th at 1:00 a.m. to admire the Calder mobile and the lights from the planes. An estimated 3,000 participated. Recalls one participant:

"I went there on my own without knowing if anyone else would come. I walked into the terminal and sure enough, no one was there. But then I heard this applause, so I looked up. And all around the balcony were hundreds of people—freaks — greeting everyone who came with this ovation...Everybody was high, everybody knew everyone else was high. Even though we had never met, because we were all connected through Fass, we felt connected to each other. It was like being part of the greatest party you could imagine, in the middle of this huge airport at 1 a.m." (McIsaac, 1993)

Steve Post, who programmed the early morning slot on weekends, responded by calling for a Central Park "Fat-In" in which revelers burned life-sized posters of Twiggy while feasting on ice cream.

These theatrical, participatory events originating from the station, which knit together an ever larger collective, were of a piece with such programs as the round-the-clock coverage of the Columbia student rebellion in 1968, the use of the station switchboard as an extensive calendar and hotline, and, somewhat later, the concerts, readings, and consciousness-raising sessions held in the studio before live audiences. All the while, conversations on literature and poetry, music, and erudite investigation of "Guy Fawkes and British radicalism" continued on the air, albeit without dominating the schedule. Unlike addressing a small, educated elite which Hill saw his Berkeley station serving in 1950 — during an ongoing political witch hunt at a time when less than 15% of the audience even owned an FM tuner — WBAI broadcast on a 50,000 watt station in the middle of the dial in the world's largest media market to an audience poised for revolutionary change. Hundreds of thousands of people

"always listened to BAI for their politics...for information about community events, when the march was gonna be, when the rally was gonna be...Hell, the whole Chicago Democratic Convention [protest] was organized by BAI...We all should have gone to Chicago and have been tried as conspirators instead of just the Chicago Seven...because we were all in on it." (Vin Scalia, quoted in Sand, 1994, p. 2)

This exuberance seems only a slight exaggeration given Fass' participation in the founding of the Yippies in early 1968, his close and abiding friendship with Paul Krassner, Jerry Rubin, and Hoffman, and his personal participation in the Chicago demonstrations. WBAI's extraordinary experiment probing the dialogic and propagandistic capacities of radio lasted beyond its birth in the 60s. In the early 70s the station found itself confronting new political and economic circumstances

and a changing social milieu.

CRISIS AT WBAI

By the turn of the decade most of the counterculture (and straight) community in New York knew that WBAI's call-in programs would provide a safe space for someone to chat about their homosexual lover, their phobias, or problems with their rabbi. And they knew that thousands of others were listening in. New producers, notably gay and feminist activists, began blending programs into the daily schedule that included the older "personality-based" broadcasting, as critics would designate the shows of Fass and his epigones. The new shows' appeal rested more on frank and often eloquent discussions between host and audience than on "free radio's" hallucinogenic blending of music, sound effects, agitation, and spoken word. "Live radio" invited listeners to become part of some vast underground conspiracy which everyone already knew about; the newer shows were less flamboyant. In them, previously silenced, invisible or ostracized groups emerged into the media limelight and found they could recognize and speak with each other. I would not want to make this into a hard and fast distinction, but over time the subtle differences in programming style and politics widened.

As the 60s ended, these newer programs reached out to new listeners, expanding the distinct audiences WBAI served. It is at this moment, when Puerto Rican and Black nationalists, radical lesbians, Asian-American activists, feminist spokespeople, and newly empowered ecologists all begin regularly scheduled programs, that "community radio" is born. According to many accounts, no one single show or personality mattered the most, but the sequence of so many of them, one following another in a broadcast day, had an ineffable quality, with the callers and hosts engaged in an unrelenting, collective effort to speak honestly about simple issues like housework or defusing stereotypes of Greco-Americans. On paper these topics hardly seem of the same magical dimension as the "Fly-In," but for the people who heard and responded to the shows and who ended up relying on them for nurturance and education, such programming was of supreme significance. As several people recall:

"We felt we had no restrictions talking about values, trying to make sense out of our personal experiences." (Wesson, 1993)

"It's hard to imagine [as a woman] how different it was to hear someone talking honestly — about anything — on the air." (Adler, 1993)

"You have some of these same gay shows today, but none of the feeling of things crystallizing. Back then every show was an experiment. Now everyone sounds like a therapist selling his 60 minute cassette." (Sacher, 1993)

Critics have called some of the programs from the newer movements amateurish, hosted by people who knew little about "good radio." One listener wrote in 1972:

"BAI has been...more fatuous in its thinking and planning that I would have thought possible two or three years ago...[T]he station, in an unthinking and somewhat lazy way, has become the special preserve of small coteries and little in groups whose idea is speaking to the

converted...Your concentration upon matters that are peripheral and even silly enervates and dilutes the attention that should be given to subjects that are desperately important." (WBAI, 1972)

As examples of silly and peripheral programs, this listener cites a preponderance of "feminist orgasm worship" and his displeasure with Charles Pitts. Pitts was the radical host of the country's first regularly scheduled, openly gay radio program, and this critic calls him "spiteful, intolerant, and tedious, and a querulous spoiled brat to boot." (Ibid.)

WBAI had been relatively solvent during the late 60s. It had launched a major fund drive and in early 1971 moved its operations to a large church, a comfortable, well-equipped facility fondly remembered by all who worked there. The nearly 30,000 subscribers who pledged yearly support in the early 70s for a service which they could get for free was a huge number by subsequent standards — subscriptions plummeted to 8,000 after the disastrous strike in 1977. The cushion of some major outside funding and a large subscriber base enabled WBAI's experiment in diversifying its programming to continue into the 70s — at least until 1974. In that year, several difficulties concerning station financing began to converge.

The first hint of a problem had occurred in 1969. A guest on Julius Lester's program, "The Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution," read an anti-Semitic poem written by a Black teen over the air. The poem had been as a response to the teacher strike and the turmoil in Ocean Hill/ Brownsville over community control of schools, where tensions had boiled over in a confrontation between the largely Jewish teachers' union and the local Black community's desire to hire and fire school personnel. Lester, a prominent spokesperson for the civil rights and Black nationalist movements, did not himself advocate the poem's vitriolic, pro-Hitler sentiments, but the program elicited enormous response, leading to pickets at the station and ongoing public outcry. The station took a principled First Amendment stand, acknowledging that some listeners were offended but arguing that Albert Shanker and racists within the teachers' union had exaggerated the incident. In this imbroglio, which included death threats and other hints of violence, Lester's staunchest allies were the station's Jewish programmers (Post, Josephson, and others) while his comrades in the Black community remained largely silent. (Lester subsequently converted to Judaism.) Although the station's mass subscription base did not greatly suffer from this controversy, a core group of "wealthy Jewish communists" who were generous to the station in the past became reluctant to give as much support as before. (Josephson, 1993)

Union leader Margot Adler, feminist host of early a.m. call-in show "Hour of the Wolf" which combined public affairs and personal commentary, has no doubt when the station's real difficulties began.

"The Vietnam War ended, and we lost half our audience. It was as simple as that. BAI grew from the blood of the Vietnamese." (Adler, 1993)

From Adler's perspective the large audience for both the free radio of the 60s and the newer shows in the early 70s were primarily drawn from people listening to the two daily news shows and late-evening war summaries.

No one would dispute the assessment that the station's financial success was largely the fruit of WBAI's award-winning news team, which since 1965 provided New York's most comprehensive coverage of both the war and the antiwar Movement. In 1965 news director Chris Koch was one of the first Americans to produce programs directly from Hanoi, a clandestine feat for which he was fired from the station, only to return with honor after subscribers rallied to his support. Dale Minor won an Armstrong Award for his on the scene coverage of the campaign around Da Nang in 1967. Seymour Hersh broke the My Lai story on WBAI in 1969.

These famous highlights of WBAI's war reporting deserve all the accolades they have garnered. However they should not obscure the central importance of what WBAI, and its sister stations in the Pacifica network, accomplished as a *daily* phenomenon. It was the only media outlet in New York which made extensive use of *Agence Française*, which was the sole major western news agency with a staff in Hanoi. WBAI's lengthy morning and evening news reports of the war were supplemented in 1967 by a new Washington news bureau, as well as by hundreds of special public-affairs programs on all aspects of government policy. Combined with the station's involvement with the antiwar Movement — live coverage of demonstrations, teach-ins, and strikes — and the extensive bulletin board/calendar service which it broadcast daily, the programming around the Vietnam war built a huge audience who habitually listened to WBAI. This listenership was the station's bread and butter, the mass base from which experiments in "free radio" could draw an audience. As one longtime staff member put it:

"Everyone was against the war by 1970. All these people from Westchester and Great Neck didn't just listen, they subscribed to BAI. This wasn't your hardcore new left or counter-culture types from the Village, [an implicit reference to Fass' audience] but thousands of middle class lawyers and teachers who liked to get high. They were the ones giving us all our money." (Josephson, 1993)

Assessing such a dynamic situation is complicated. The individual programmers — especially the feminists — recount an unquestionable sense of "calling" about their work at the station, an attitude which may have deepened during the postwar period. Even a small audience by commercial standards might mean 30,000-50,000 listeners, a considerable number by the measure of the print media or public speaking. The times were confusing; one era was ending without any clearly defined new one emerging. For that reason, WBAI's producers and audience depended ever more on the common etheric space in which they had habitually gathered to make collective sense of what was happening.

While Pacifica's history has been plagued by financial insecurity, WBAI's success in attracting subscribers in the late 60s perhaps dulled the edge which a fear of poverty had forged. As the red ink began to mount in late 1973, eliminating staff seemed unthinkable. When the station faced escalating financial problems in 1974 in a clear act of solidarity, many salaried personnel opted for pay cuts. Several now claim that they would have worked for nothing, believing the thrill of being on the air provided enough compensation ("the greatest high of all"). Indeed, some key staff members did work for almost nothing — under \$10,000 for fulltime work in 1975. Yet, in spite of all this altruism, one must consider the assessment offered by

Larry Josephson, the station manager in 1974 when the troubles first began to threaten overall operations:

"What about the secretaries and janitors? They're not on the air and they want to get paid every week. That's what everybody seemed to forget." (Josephson, 1993)

Thus by the mid-70s two contradictory phenomena intersected. For a decade WBAI's staff had experimented in fulfilling "the social destiny of radio" in an unprecedented manner. If not every experiment succeeded, this did not diminish the staff's accomplishment using the power of broadcasting to create a vastly expanded, heterogeneous public sphere. However, one price of this success was an increasing distance on the part of some of the most experienced hosts from the exigencies of keeping the station financially viable.

As the financial situation worsened, a series of charges of sexism, racism, and elitism aggravated this complex situation. Since its founding in 1960, WBAI was dominated by a largely white, male staff. Women programmers struggled to intervene in this heavily male environment. The most well-known, pioneering feminist broadcaster, Nanette Rainone, began producing "CR" in 1970, a show in which female listeners participated weekly in a two-hour, on-air consciousness raising session. Rainone's program simply featured "a group of women honestly discussing their lives." (Post, 1993, p. 104) In one of the more dramatic programs, women were invited to come with their mothers to the studio for gynecological self-help sessions. Unlike the late night and early morning call-in shows, "CR" was broadcast midday, probably

"touching and transform[ing] more lives than all of WBAI's broadcasting of the previous decades." (Ibid.)

The show's calls were screened to prevent men from participating, a controversial practice which in certain respects ran counter to Pacifica's traditional claims to freedom of speech.

Nonetheless, Rainone, who became station Program Director in late 1971, served as a model for a range of producers, men and women, as they filled the air with call-in shows and public affairs programs which attempted to realize the revolutionary feminist injunction to connect the personal and the political. Responding to the charge that Rainone and other new programmers were diluting WBAI's message, General Manager Ed Goodman wrote in 1973 that

"people who were involved in 60s politics are now committed to a much less visible kind of personal politics and growth. It remains to be seen how important, in terms of impact on the whole society, this new manifestation of energy will be. However, one thing is clear. It is more difficult to translate these new developments into arresting, provocative, communicative radio...It's not all out there in the streets anymore to cover." (Goodman, 1973, p.5)

Others did not defend Rainone, however, citing her tenure as program director as the moment when the station began to Balkanize, with each host staking claim to precious airtime without regard to overall scheduling blend. Whether the struggle

to bring feminist consciousness to WBAI was fondly or bitterly recalled, there is little dispute that both WBAI's programming and internal staff relations confronted some of the core issues of feminism and patriarchy during this period.

Less successfully addressed were the subtler issue of elitism and the vast problem of racism. The charges of elitism at WBAI were less a direct attack on Pacifica's "highbrow" approach to programming — which was far less hegemonic in New York in 1970 than it was in Berkeley — than a reflection of its complex class dynamics and the peculiar psychology of white guilt found generally in the New Left and epitomized by the New York Jewish left in particular. Most WBAI programmers were moderately affluent children of the middle class whose political sensibilities were forged during the cauldron of the 60s. Participation in a range of civil rights and anti-imperialist movements led them to attempt to idealize bonds of solidarity with those outside their own class background. (There was no indication of this particular vision in Lewis Hill's genuinely pro-labor orientation when he founded Pacifica in the 40s.) However well-intentioned and motivated they were, in their utopian zeal, members of the staff never discovered a populist, truly cross-class form of programming, which might invite "the silent majority" to keep their radios tuned to 99.5. This dilemma, now almost three decades old, struck many staff members far more acutely in 1970 than it does today. In this regard it bears repeating that Hill and earlier leaders of Pacifica had no illusions about using intellectual and avant-garde programming to reach a mass audience. Such a goal would have run counter to their mandarin vision of broadcasting only excellent and challenging cultural work in order to influence "leading opinion makers."

The complexities of politics and programming are summed up neatly by Josephson. According to his analysis, the network, reliant on volunteer labor and hence lacking normal criteria for screening employees, has chronically suffered from a split between two groups — the "radio people" and "the politicos." (Josephson, 1993) Pacifica was founded and sustained by media professionals, but has always attracted those who see it less as a radio network than as a bully pulpit for various causes. By the mid-60s Pacifica attracted more and more commentators who were basically political agitators. This group had sophisticated and important insights into U.S. society, but, according to Josephson, in their idealism (or dogmatism) they simply lacked the patience to master the skills of "good" radio. Unlike the first generation of "radio people," these newer broadcasters tended to show less tolerance for diverse opinions and seemed generally unconcerned with the formal elements of interesting sounding broadcasts.

In Josephson's narrative, the fundamental problem facing WBAI in the mid-70s was that activists ("radical lesbian ayatollahs") overwhelmed and eliminated media professionals such as himself, leading the station to emit a much less attractive overall sound. This process did not happen all at once. Nonetheless, by 1973 Fass went on extended leave; Josephson planned to move to the Bay area; Julius Lester had left, lamenting in his farewell note that WBAI was becoming more of a radio station and less of a community. There was a suspicion that the glory days had passed.

Josephson's overview rings true to a large extent, although it hardly has gone unchallenged. Countering his overly neat division are those who believe it was

Josephson's own elitism and timidity in committing WBAI to an even more overtly political schedule when he became interim General Manager in 1974, which led many "politicos" to experience the feeling of airtime scarcity. While it may be an exaggeration that "Larry had no politics at all" (Wesson, 1993), Josephson was, by his own admission, not someone who wanted "to use WBAI to save the world." (Josephson, 1993) He was also clearly more impressed than many other staff members by the power of major fund-raisers on the Board of Directors to purchase the church building for the station on the strength of a promissory note. These "liberals" believed that the larger budget needed after moving to the church meant that WBAI could no longer afford to act so purist about sources of income. For this faction, development energy should go toward obtaining larger grants and major donor contributions, mitigating the station's reliance on its diminishing listener-sponsorship.

Pursuing such a funding strategy greatly impacted the facts of life at the station. On-the-air marathons might still glorify WBAI as "the voice of the Movement," but the overall requirements of grantsmanship led Josephson and others to stress the programming's professional and technical qualities to major donors. Little things around the station began to change, which reflected this shifting orientation. Tape-recording equipment, previously available "for anyone who walked in off the street" (Woodward, 1993), was now locked up. Volunteers needing mentorship came to be seen as hindrances by the veteran programmers. And the station's overall ethos subtly shifted towards enhancing infrastructure and coddling "experts," away from unpredictable programming and radical politics. Most consequentially, in 1974 Josephson chose to suspend publication of the program guide, the *Folio*, in a cost-cutting effort, which to some indicated disdain for WBAI's core listeners. It is doubtful any of these problems alone would have pushed the station over the edge, but the aggregation of various difficulties proved disastrous.

The charge of racism permeates WBAI to this day (although current problems concern anti-Semitism, Afrocentrism, and, ironically, the lack of "white" programming.) The central issue facing the Board in the mid-70s, upon which they based their decision to employ new personnel, was the mediocre job WBAI had done in building a multiracial audience. The new management team made sweeping proposals for programs to build a more diverse listenership, but it did so in such a way as to offend nearly all the existing staff, leading to ever more bitter sentiments and ultimately a prolonged work stoppage. However one wishes to evaluate the specific nature of racism at WBAI during this period, on the evidence of the archives and program guides one can aver that no other broadcasting outlet in the past 45 years dedicated as much consistent airtime to civil rights, to black, brown, yellow, and Native power movements, and to third world anti-imperialist struggles as did Pacifica. At WBAI, for example, Julius Lester's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was a popular and long-running program which highlighted public affairs and culture from a Black perspective. Other programs on Asian, Latino, and Native American issues were allotted regular slots.

Yet, if Lester exemplified WBAI's commitment to diversity, some found his programs very much of a piece with the idiosyncratic, personality-centered programming which the station had cultivated since the mid-60s. A telling indication of this comes from one longtime listener who recalls Lester less for his work on Black life and politics than for his conversion to vegetarianism and the

moral dilemmas he faced at Thanksgiving dinner. (Ryan, 1993) This recollection gives a good indication of the problems the Board faced as it tried to come up with a strategy to expand WBAI's coverage beyond its diminishing white, middle-class audience.

By 1975 the station was hardly "thriving on chaos." It was failing financially. There was no consistency to the daily schedule. And there was almost no audience in New York's vast nonwhite communities. For the individual programmers, each hour remained a precious sanctuary. Their smaller audiences, with whom they had developed an intricate personal relationship, were substantial. In spite of financial turmoil, these programmers remained confident that their particular show was essential in guiding New Yorkers towards the emerging ecological, gay, and feminist movements which formed and reformed through the 70s. Everyone acknowledged that there was a need for more Third World programming. Yet daily airtime was limited, and nobody wanted to cede slots for new shows.

From the Board's perspective, the "free radio" and call-in shows, which filled WBAI's schedule, had by this point become little more than vanity programming. While the programmers themselves differentiated between the Fass-inspired shows and the ones catering to the new social movements, the shows blended together within a single aural environment. In most instances these shows drew passionately devoted audiences, but as a listener-supported station, by 1974 WBAI was failing to transform enough of these listeners into subscribers. Some staff, adopting the logic of commercial broadcasting, felt that WBAI's prime central position on the FM band was going to waste. One option floated at the time was to sell WBAI's prized channel for tens of millions of dollars and relocate to another in the "left" end of the spectrum, usually reserved for educational and public broadcasting. An infusion of cash, it was argued, would have enhanced the entire network, not just the New York station. Unfortunately suspicions were running very high, and no faction was in a strong enough position to negotiate such a radical plan.

Some of the difficulties which WBAI faced in this period were generic to the challenges confronting alternative media more generally. As the 60s ended, how might nontraditional channels represent the new political forces in a way that was both honest and partisan? More importantly, what could inspire the devotion of a creative staff willing to work long hours for little money in a period which the grand inspirations of revolutionary anti-imperialism or the Age of Aquarius were on the wane? Given how quickly the new movements were factionalized, especially along the liberal/radical axis, engaged reporters found themselves in awkward situations, attempting to produce stories that would inform a larger audience without offending or betraying their activist friends. This conundrum at WBAI, which first arose in the reporting on the Weather Underground and the Black Panthers, took on the quality of pitched battles. Should, for example, innovative, pioneering gay programmers such as Charles Pitts use their program to talk about "how wonderful it was to 'diddle' little boys?" (McIsaac, 1993) Should feminists consistently promote a radical separatist line, screening out less controversial positions or male callers, thereby contradicting a central premise of "free speech radio"? As these issues arose in WBAI, mainstream media were hiring more young, politically committed journalists, providing real salaries and larger audiences. It was difficult to attract skilled, committed professionals to the life of poverty which

Pacifica promised.

Different observers lay the blame for WBAI's troubles on a variety of causes:

- the Board's wavering indecision over new policies;
- ceaseless strident and dogmatic rhetoric;
- Josephson's decision in 1974 to suspend the *Folio*, the monthly program guide, whose letters and articles helped provide an overall sense of the station's politics and its listener's attitudes;
- the boring and repetitive programming from the new social movements;
- the end of the Vietnam war.

Undisputed is the fact that between 1971-1976 the station had lost half its subscribers (from 30,000 to 15,000) and was increasing its debt, ultimately losing the church building in 1979 in a complicated tax case, where the state revoked the station's educational status. No single person or ideology shoulders the burden of guilt for this decline. More than anything else, the ending of the 60s zeitgeist seemed to deflate the innovatory zeal which WBAI experienced for almost a decade. (Sand, 1994) Given how severe the problems were becoming, one might well wonder how WBAI managed to maintain itself without any basic transformations until 1976.

In the fall of 1976, the Board hired a new General Manager, Anna Kosof; she in turn appointed a new Program Director, Pablo Yoruba Guzman. By most accounts, Kosof, Guzman, and their supporters on the Board were unprepared for the intense turmoil their new management team initiated. Those highly critical of the manner in which the managers attempted to change station practices concede that Guzman and Kosof did not create the problems they were hired to remedy. Nonetheless, it seems that this new management team, especially Kosof, was not "in sync" with WBAI's libertarian and idiosyncratic culture. Kosof had been a long-time organizer in community, affirmative action and drug treatment programs. Guzman, a former WBAI programmer, had been a highly visible and effective public-relations coordinator of the Puerto Rican activist organization, the Young Lords, before becoming involved in the local salsa music business.

This was a moment in which the station made a conscientious attempt to transform its entire schedule in order to redefine itself as a "community station." Guzman's first (last, and only) order of business was his proposal for a completely revised schedule using salsa to draw in a larger audience, especially those potential listeners from New York's burgeoning Third World community. Kosof, in her role as manager, struggled to remedy what she saw as rampant internal chaos with operational directives ("no pot smoking in the employee lounge") and more significantly with injunctions that the staff stop discussing internal station politics on the air.

Throughout the fall of 1976 the paid and volunteer staff began holding ad hoc meetings in order to present the Board with a united front opposing the impending changes. Although the staff shared little genuine solidarity about larger programming goals or about how to stem the financial hemorrhage, the simple fact of the meetings, which originally had 60-80 participants, seemed encouraging. However, as an example of the quandary the staff found itself in, when Kosof offered to resign in November, many rallied behind her, not because they believed

she was well-suited for her position but in order to prevent another torturous search for a General Manager. As one participant recounted, the meetings which led to unionization in late 1976 became increasingly agonizing. Everyone realized that change was imperative, but no one seemed able to articulate the actual forms change should take. (Wesson, 1993) United in their desire to retain the maximum time to broadcast their individual programs, the staff's lack of coherent long-term strategy meant that outsiders had to intervene and transform a basically dysfunctional system.

Guzman, more than Kosof, was cast as the antagonist in the drama as it played itself out. Although WBAI surely needed someone experienced with affirmative action policies, Kosof seemed too alien to the WBAI phenomenon, "a straight, uptight woman who didn't have a drop of 60s blood in her body." (Wesson, 1993) In contrast, Guzman was a former WBAI programmer, Movement activist, and dynamic personality. Several programmers originally believed that he understood the nuances of station politics and could change things. His plan to institute a consistent and popular daily schedule which emphasized salsa music and programming aimed primarily at the Latino and Black communities seemed a plausible proposal as a place to begin negotiations.

What seemed to rile the staff, however, was Guzman's arrogance and his insinuation that he had been hired to salvage the station from some old white hippies. He justified his proposal with this claim:

"This is not the 60s...You can't just talk shit anymore...I want professional revolutionaries." (*Village Voice*, 1977)

If other staff members attempted to challenge his vision, they were met by charges of racism. Such race-baiting by a respected non-white activist was highly provocative — if not received as "simply ridiculous," as one opponent put it who would have welcomed more third world and salsa but not Guzman as program director. (Wesson, 1993) (It also foreshadowed problems at other stations in which Third World programmers have consistently leveled charges of racism at the Board and management.) While all the staff agreed that WBAI needed to change, Guzman seemed to lack any sympathy for the work the programmers accomplished, even though he had once been one of them. The staff's lingering idealism and an emerging, if pyrrhic, sentiment of workplace solidarity would ultimately prove strong enough to block these initial challenges for change.

In their defense, Guzman, and to a lesser extent Kosof, wanted to bring to WBAI a different democratic model for the mass media. Large, underrepresented segments of the community (loosely and positively defined as "third world") would be invited to participate in station affairs as both programmers and audience. Observers other than Guzman saw certain racism in staff resistance to his plans. The union's claims about autocratic management or the "intensity" of audience connection to a favorite host might well be true, but these qualities could not disguise another, equally compelling fact: A large number of extremely reflective, mostly white, new left and social movement activists could not accommodate some of the emerging political and cultural possibilities of the New York scene — what one now generally calls "multiculturalism politics" — and so reorient the station.

By the end of 1976, the hostility between staff and management and the impending

restructuring were a constant and bitter topic dealt with in on-air programming. Finally, Kosof issued yet another memorandum calling for cessation of airing of dirty station laundry. Some of the staff refused; the memo became a topic of on-air discussion. It was at this point that Guzman announced the full plans of his "nuevo barrio" schedule, promising to build the subscription base to 50,000 members, people who were "dissatisfied by plastic radio, yet conditioned by it." (*Village Voice*, 1977) This only further riled the staff. In early 1977 Guzman held a public meeting to present his view of the situation. The call-in and live radio shows would continue, but now in a much more tightly-formatted overall schedule — "ribbon" as opposed to "block" programming. In this model, the entire broadcast day or week would be constructed as an integral "soundscape" rather than as a series of discrete programs. In Guzman's words:

"The staff has had in the past several months de facto control of the station, but could not turn the situation around. Rather, decline and isolation accelerated. Thus, if left to their own devices, the present staff would take BAI completely down the drain...this is the grounds from which spring charges of racism, elitism, and block further progress." (Pacifica, 1977a)

At this point Guzman claimed it was impossible to institute minor programming changes which would leave the basic schedule intact; to prove that, he said the obvious:

"Financially, the station is incapable of keeping on with its present situation." (Ibid.)

From Guzman's perspective, which also was that of the majority of the Board, apparently, WBAI could no longer afford to pay homage to the rhetoric of an individual programmer's autonomy if that meant keeping the station white and in debt. The station, according to one board member, was "suffering from too much democracy." (*Village Voice*, 1977) Guzman closed his presentation with a lengthy discussion of this "fresh approach" based on a daily salsa music show combined with a public affairs bureau, which would feature "nuevo barrio politics." Ironically, although he had been hired to open the station to Third World programming, Guzman fired the only Black woman on staff, Deloris Costello, apparently finding her show implicated in the old regime.

Rather than participate in further discussions, the staff viewed Guzman's plans as an effrontery and refused to negotiate. A strike or lockout began on February 11, after Kosof told the Board she no longer had control of the situation. The Board then decided to take the station off the air in order to diffuse some of the hostility. Before power could be turned off, however, an ad hoc group of twelve announcers and engineers occupied the master control room at the station as well as the transmitter in the Empire State Building in order to broadcast their position one last time. For five hours this band played music, presented staff demands and chatted with their audience. Some in the station stayed locked in for almost six weeks, surrounded and supported by other union members.

Vehement in countering the claims of racism coming from the Board and Guzman, the union insisted the strike be seen in terms of class struggle. Recalcitrant management was attempting to balance the books on the backs of employees, while

using the ideology of race to divide the staff. The union had two central demands: recognition of paid and non-paid staff as union members, and changes in programming only when "consistent with Pacifica principles." New programs would be adopted only after discussions of an agreed-upon timeline negotiated by the program director and the union. As one taped press release claimed:

"The format is going to change, we know that. But change has to be rational and planned...not en masse by people who have no experience in programming. People have to have opportunity to be creative without being crushed by a format." (Pacifica Foundation, 1977b)

Hundreds of listeners formed "Friends of BAI," picketed the homes of Board members, demonstrated at the Empire State Building transmitter and maintained a round the clock vigil at the station where some of the union were locked in.

Discussions dragged on inconclusively. Initially the Board argued that only paid employees could officially be union members, but since less than 20% of the workers were paid, this position proved untenable. (Precedence for accepting unpaid staff as union members had been set at KPFA in Berkeley in earlier labor disputes.) Although the union "agreed" to let the Board retain nominal control over programming, the Board agreed not to implement Guzman's proposals. Claiming victory, the union returned to work, appropriately enough, on April Fools Day, 1977. By the time the strike was over, Guzman was gone, followed by Kosof a year later. George Fox, the most influential and interesting member of the local Board who had the trust of some of the staff members recalls that "the crowd was a lynch mob, using microphone wire to hang Kosof." (Fox, 1993)

Most of the renegade programmers signed a letter promising to obey all FCC policies in the future and more or less were allowed to maintain their shows. As Celeste Wesson, one of key organizers of the union, put it poignantly,

"We saved the station from the Board, but we couldn't save it from ourselves." (1993)

No one felt any elation at the "victory" and the station "seemed like a morgue." (Ibid.) Some activists, including most notably Bob Fass, have come to feel they have "sacrificed their best years to BAI" and now wonder about the cost (Fass, 1993). Guzman's departure led to more than a decade in which "minorities" would have a very limited voice in WBAI's daily sound. By Reagan's election, most of the staff involved in the strike had left the station, driven into other careers by chronic economic problems. By the mid-80s, however, ribbon programming as it was called gradually transformed the schedule. Free radio and call-in shows still had a place, but now they fit into a weekly flow which featured third world programming and exhibited some of the structure and continuity which the Board hoped for in the mid-70s management shift.

It is tempting to consider the strike as an expression of the political unconscious of the identity-based struggles of the new social movements. Do new movement politics all "harbor a nostalgia for class?" (Jameson, 1990, p. 388) Over the course of the struggle, the various gay, feminist, and ecological, and new left programmers came to identify themselves collectively as "workers" in order to press their claims. The staff at WBAI sought to unite their various claims "by way of their common

situation as workers." (Ibid, p. 386) While much emphasis by both positivist and post-Marxist theory of new social movements lies in measuring the chasm between movement and class politics, in this particular instance there seems to be a convergence. Ironically, class solidarity at WBAI was made impossible by the charges of racism and the inability of the union to demonstrate any inclusive plan to counter those who claimed the staff's action was basically a white power play.

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Political economy of Reali-TV

by Chad Raphael

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From the sea change in U.S. television in the 1980s emerged a programming trend variously described as "infotainment," "reality-based television," "tabloid TV," "crime-time television," "trash TV," and "on-scene shows." [1] [\[open notes in new window\]](#) The welter of terms created by television critics to describe these new programs masked their underlying connection as a response to economic restructuring within the industry. This essay offers a rough categorization of these programs, sketches the industrial context from which they emerged, and points to the economic problems they were meant to solve. [2] Although my focus here is on political economy, rather than on textual or audience issues, I do not want to imply that these programs' cultural significance can be reduced to their relations of production and distribution. Yet without understanding the political-economic forces which drove the spread of this genre, textual and audience studies risk reifying it as an expression of audience demand, or of their creators, or of a cultural, discursive, or ontological shift unrelated to the needs of those who run the television industry. If this genre exhibits a kind of textual excess, its emergence reflects a relative scarcity of means. I conclude with suggestions for how textual and audience studies might link the new "reality" of television to shifts in the larger U.S. political-economy since the mid-1980s.

Among the swirl of neologisms, my preferred term for these programs will be "Reali-TV," [3] which has the advantage of stressing the programming medium (versus "infotainment"), of illuminating connections between seemingly different programs (such as "crime-time," "tabloid TV" and "on-scene shows"), and of avoiding the high cultural bias implicit in the notion of "trash TV." The term "Reali-TV" reminds us of the inseparability of "reality" and "television" in these texts. It points to the overarching connections between these otherwise disparate textual forms, which lie both in their distinctive claims to represent the real (and the need to interrogate those claims), and their common impact on the realities of power and economic relations in the industry. Reali-TV, then, is an umbrella term for a number of programming trends that have rapidly expanded since the late 80s across all hours of network schedules, first-run syndication, and cable.

Production practices common to these programs include the following:

- extensive use of "actuality" footage of their subjects, whether these are police staking out a drug den or Mom and Dad yukking it up in front of the

- camcorder;
- reenactments of events, performed by professional actors, or by the people who experienced them, or a mix of both;
- a tendency to avoid the studio in favor of "on-scene" shooting, sometimes at the same place where the events they represent occurred;
- mixing footage shot by unpaid amateur videographers with that of professionals;
- appealing to the conventions of "liveness," and "immediacy" through on-location interviews, subjective camera work, and synchronized sound;
- and appropriating traditional conventions of news coverage, such as the use of anchors or hosts, remote reporting, and the pretense to "spontaneity."

These production techniques are combined differently in five formats of Reali-TV, which can be distinguished according to how much each relies on nontraditional labor (for story development, writing, performing, and camerawork) and production inputs (such as sets, props, and costumes.) Two formats continue to depend mainly on professional labor and traditional inputs. First, the network newsmagazines — whose ranks have swollen in the past few years with the introduction of *48 Hours* and *Street Stories* (CBS), *Primetime Live* (ABC), *Dateline NBC*, and others — are still entirely professionally-produced and employ the same mix of studio and location footage as the evening news. The same is true of tabloid TV shows (such as the syndicated *A Current Affair* and its imitators), despite their different representational strategies. However, several other formats use hybrid production techniques. Hidden video programs (such as *Totally Hidden Video*), which enjoyed a minor resurgence in the early 1990s, rely on professional camera crews and actors maneuvering unsuspecting non-professional performers into embarrassing or humorous situations.

Crime-time and emergency response programs (*Rescue 911*, *America's Most Wanted*, *Unsolved Mysteries*, and the many imitators these shows have spawned on cable and first-run syndication), are shot and edited by professionals, and introduced by a regular host. Yet they also may employ some amateur footage of disasters, and nonprofessional performers enacting their own rescues or crime experiences. These programs also take advantage of props, sets, costumes, etc. provided by law enforcement authorities, corrections institutions, parole boards, and emergency medical crews. Finally, home video programs (such as *America's Funniest Home Videos*) rely on amateur footage that is professionally edited. This format depends most heavily on nontraditional inputs and amateur labor, not only for "scripting," performing and shooting the hijinks, but also to do the work of studio audiences (who vote for the "funniest" video, for example). Before discussing how these techniques have lowered production costs, we need to examine the larger economic picture from whence they sprang.

DECLINE OF THE NETWORKS: WEBS WANE AS COMPETITION CLIMBS!

As a fiscal strategy, Reali-TV emerged in the late 1980s in response to the economic restructuring of U.S. television. Much of the restructuring story has been told by scholars and in the trade press: how the number of video distribution channels expanded rapidly, with the growth of cable, VCRs, the Fox network, and local independent stations; how the television audience was increasingly fragmented; how advertising revenues now had to be spread among a larger pool of

distributors; and how this dilution of advertising spending created pressure on broadcasters and cablecasters to cut per-program production costs. Less cited causes for production budget cuts included the high levels of corporate debt incurred by the big three networks after each was sold in the mid-80s,[4] and advertiser-driven changes in audience measurement techniques designed to identify specific market segments (most notorious was the People-Meter, which yielded dramatically lower ratings for the networks[5]).

By the late 1980s, then, the economic picture of U.S. television had become decidedly more crowded. If the networks remained in the foreground as the major economic force in the industry, the purveyors of cable, VCRs, and first-run syndication winked and beckoned viewers in the background. Advertisers and audience measurement services busily tried to record who was watching what, how much attention they paid to the commercial breaks, and whether they were buying any of it. However, to understand how Reali-TV emerged as a cost-cutting solution in this new economic environment of the late 1980s, we need to examine how increased competition in the distribution of television programming affected the sphere of production.

SQUEEZE ON PRODUCTION: OUCH! WEBS AND SUPPLIERS FEEL THE PINCH

As television distributors fought over smaller advertising shares, and shouldered more debt, program producers (network production arms, major Hollywood studios, and the few small independent production companies) all faced rapidly rising costs in the 1980s. For prime-time producers, the average cost of an hour drama soared to over \$1 million per episode by the end of the decade, and costs were increasing by roughly 8%-10% a year.[6] Prices were driven up primarily by "above the line" costs such as talent, direction, scriptwriting, music composition, computer animation, and location costs.[7] The star system for above-the-line labor became especially pronounced, as network programmers, agent-packagers, and production companies responded to the greater risks of capital involved in creating new shows by increasingly demanding names associated with prior success. Greater demand for stars created an artificial labor shortage and inflated salaries for the lucky few.

These rising costs were accompanied by smaller per-show revenues, creating a squeeze on production companies' earnings from both sides of the ledger. Producers were forced to accept smaller license fees for their programs than they had commanded from the networks before the new era of competition. The threatened networks were scaling back outlays, and pay-cable and cable network distributors and syndicators also lacked deep pockets for program purchases. In addition, changes in federal tax laws eliminated producers' investment tax credits, which often meant the difference between earning a profit and taking a loss on a program.[8] By mid-decade, caught between rising costs and lower network license fees, most producers could no longer make back their investments in first-run network showings. By 1986, producers were losing up to \$100,000 per episode for half hour shows, and \$200,000 to \$300,000 for hour dramas.[9] Producers now were forced to deficit-finance their programs and cross their fingers in hopes the show would survive three network seasons, providing enough episodes for domestic and foreign syndication and a chance to recoup their initial investments.

PRODUCERS TO LABOR: DROP DEAD

Feeling the squeeze on profits, production companies and the networks initiated a series of cost-cutting strategies that translated into an attack on labor, mainly on below-the-line workers such as technicians, engineers, and extras. The first move was a wave of staff cutbacks at studios and network news departments. In the mid-1980s, Fox cut 20% of its studio staff, Capital Cities/ABC 10% of its staff, CBS 30% of its administrative staff and 10% of its News Division. NBC resisted a 17-week strike by the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET) in 1987, shedding 200 union jobs. By 1992, NBC had eliminated 30% of its News Division through layoffs and bureau closings. Even network standards and practices departments, much-derided self-censors of the broadcasting industry, faced the ax.[10]

The second part of the cost cutting strategy involved attempts to bypass union labor, spurring an unprecedented wave of strikes by above- and below-line labor unions and craft guilds. In addition to the NABET, the Directors Guild, the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), the Screen Extras Guild (SEG), and American Federation of Radio and Television Artists (AFTRA) all struck, while the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) struck twice, and the Writers Guild three times. Above-the-line workers especially sought more residuals for the use of programs on new media and overseas.[11] Lower paid labor, such as members of the Screen Extras Guild, took a more defensive stand commensurate with their weaker bargaining power. The SEG strike ended with union members accepting a 25% wage cut, changes in overtime schedules, and the acceptance of producers' prerogative to hire more non-union labor. (The extras' bargaining position was hurt by the Screen Actors Guild's refusal to merge with the less powerful union or even to support its position in contract negotiations.) This increase in labor unrest was both a response to, and motivating force, in attempts to break the power of the unions.

As a result, producers exacerbated the long-term split in the Hollywood labor market between "core" workers (such as the successful SAG members who enjoy higher pay, more job security, and who share management tasks and interests) and "periphery" workers (such as the SEG members, who have little job security, work part-time schedules, and suffer lower wage scales).[12] Producers also responded to union demands by using non-union Hollywood labor, and shifting production to regions where cheaper labor was available, such as Canada and the "right-to-work" states of the U.S. South.

These tactics cut across entertainment and news program production. Disney and MCA led the industry shift toward building studio complexes in Florida. The loss of the investment tax credit, which was only applicable to programs produced in the U.S., helped spur a shift of production to Canada, where lower costs and more pliable unions could save \$200,000 to \$300,000 an episode for dramatic series. [13] In news programming, CNN and Fox led the way in producing with lower-paid, non-union labor and by breaking down job classifications, and their "success" was increasingly imitated by the traditional networks. One former CBS executive noted that the lesson of CNN was "Break the unions!"[14] NBC appears to have the learned the lesson quickest, developing a 24 hour a day affiliate news service based in Charlotte, North Carolina and staffed with non-union labor. Some Fox affiliates experimented with subcontracting their entire evening newscasts.

EXTRA, EXTRA! REALI-TV FITS THE BILL

Reali-TV shows gained currency in this environment of relative financial scarcity and labor unrest of the late 1980s. Economically, the genre fit the needs of producers and distributors alike for cheaper programming. First, these programs largely did away with higher-priced stars and union talent. The only "name" actors on these shows were briefly seen as hosts. In the crime-time/emergency shows, roles in reenactments of crimes and rescues were filled by unknown actors and, sometimes, by the people the stories were based upon. In programs such as *Cops*, segments followed law enforcement officials in the course of their work, eschewing reenactments and the need for actors entirely. The home video and hidden video programs likewise avoided professional union talent. In bypassing more expensive performers, the programs' producers also escaped the grips of the Hollywood agents, who had come to occupy the role of program developers and packagers in the early 1980s, and who exacted considerable fees for their services.[15]

Producers of Reali-TV, particularly of the crime-time/ emergency shows and home and hidden video programs, led a wider industry move toward using non-union, freelance production crews. The Arthur Co. offers a good example. In 1987, it lost the rights to produce the network prime-time drama *Airwolf*, after battling with the Writers Guild over cable royalties, then turned to producing low budget, non-union programs for syndication and basic cable. In 1991, Arthur Co. returned to primetime with *FBI: the Untold Stories*, a Reali-TV reprise of the bureau's long-running romance with the tube. Similarly, Fox's *America's Most Wanted*, one of the trendsetters of Reali-TV when it premiered in 1987, used different freelance crews for each segment. Even some newsmagazines, such as *CBS Street Stories*, turned to freelance camera crews and news producers. The home video programs relied on amateur camcorder enthusiasts and freelance professionals. Reali-TV producers also partook of the move to cheaper labor regions. Grosso-Jacobson Entertainment, which has created more crime-time shows than any other production house (including *Top Cops*, *True Blue*, and *Secret Service*), shot all of its patriotic paeans to U.S. law enforcers in Toronto.[16]

The 1988 Writers' Strike, a twenty-two week affair which delayed the opening of the fall season, was crucial for the rise of Reali-TV. Existing Reali-TV shows were largely unaffected by the strike, since they already relied very little on writers. In addition, the delay of the season gave producers and programmers the impetus to develop future shows which did not depend on writing talent. Tabloid TV pioneer Peter Brennan (of *Hard Copy*), when asked whether he was concerned about a potential SAG strike in 1992, shrugged off the threat:

"Remember the Writers Guild strike in '88?...that was the year that gave rise to reality TV." [17]

Reali-TV programs also cut costs by wholeheartedly embracing low-end production values. Direct cinema techniques such as handheld cameras and the use of available lighting made shows without reenactments (such as *Cops* and the network newsmagazines) particularly cheap. Programs that employ reenacted material (such as *Rescue 911* and *Unsolved Mysteries*) often avoid traditionally painstaking lighting and make-up to approximate the "real" look of direct cinema footage, and its relatively low production costs. Although the reenactments may require some expenses for on-location shooting, going on-scene is often less costly

than renting studio space. In addition, crime-time and emergency shows have minimized costs of sets, props, and costumes by convincing the agencies they profile to donate police cars, equipment, and even uniforms for the production crew, so they can pass for police at a crime scene.[18] Finally, research and logistical costs for most categories of Reali-TV shows are tempered by the information subsidies traditionally extended to the news and entertainment media by public relations operatives hoping to plant favorable stories about their government agency, medical technology, legal clients, etc.[19]

As a result of their shoestring production budgets, primetime Reali-TV shows enjoy the distinction of recouping their makers' investments from network license fees alone. With rare exceptions, Reali-TV is the only prime-time programming category which is not deficit-financed (see table 1, which is based on production costs for a representative season.) Reali-TV also enjoys success in the low-fee first run syndication and made-for-cable fields; the growth of copycat Reali-TV shows has occurred primarily in these markets.

FINANCE AND SYNDICATION: REALI-TV RIGHT FOR FYN SIN FIGHT

A changing regulatory climate also contributed to the economic advantages of Reali-TV. In 1970, amid concerns about network power over production companies, the FCC barred the networks from owning a financial interest in, and retaining syndication rights to, most primetime entertainment programming (daytime shows, sports, and news were not affected.) The financial and syndication, or "finsyn," rules also limited the number of hours of primetime shows the network could produce. A 1980 consent decree in an antitrust case further limited network primetime entertainment production to 2.5 hours per week for several years. When the FCC enacted the finsyn rules, its stated goals were to encourage local programming and small independent producers. In regard to the latter aim, the FCC hoped that if network production were reined in, other producers might create more innovative, diverse programming. But the small independents have not flourished, as the large capital investments and risks required of program producers meant that Hollywood studios with substantial financing would control the field. As with the small independents in the film industry, television's smaller production houses depend on winning network contracts for their programming before they can secure bank financing to make it. [20] Independents thus have not enjoyed a great deal of financial or creative power over the development of new programming, especially when compared with the major studios or the top agent-packagers. In many ways, the same relations hold true in first-run syndication and the made-for-cable markets. Here, the small independents are often financed by the big multi-system operators (such as Time-Warner) and the dominant distribution companies (including those run by major studios) in exchange for syndication rights.

Throughout the 1980s, the networks challenged the finsyn rules, arguing that they were no longer in a position to dominate program distribution as they had before the spread of cable and VCRs, and that they needed to be allowed to compete internationally in the global television market. In 1991 the FCC allowed the networks to finance and syndicate their own in-house or co-produced programs, and to negotiate for the rights to some outside-produced shows. A long series of appeals by Hollywood studios and independent producers was exhausted by 1994,

and the finsyn rules were repealed.

Although Fox has been unaffected by the finsyn rules and has always produced the bulk of its programming inhouse,[21] the three major networks may very well have anticipated the repeal of these restrictions and positioned themselves to syndicate Reali-TV programming domestically and abroad. One of the striking characteristics of primetime Reali-TV programs is that so many of them are network productions or co-productions (see table 1). This is true not only of the network newsmagazines, which are produced by their news divisions, but also of crime-time/emergency response and the home video shows. As producers and co-producers of the shows, networks can retain the rights to distribute them under the new rules.

INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION: IT'S A REAL, REAL, REAL, REAL WORLD

Producers and network investors have also been attracted to Reali-TV because of its ability to sell abroad. Since primetime Reali-TV earns back its production costs with the first U.S. network showing, any further syndication represents pure profit. U.S. Reali-TV has been sold overseas using two methods. Some shows are licensed outright to foreign broadcasters, the way most U.S. programming traditionally has been marketed. Episodes of top-rated network crime-time/ emergency programs *Unsolved Mysteries* and *Rescue 911* have been sold abroad in this manner. One international program distributor claims,

"The easiest and most profitable thing for a distributor to do with reality shows is to license them as they are. Prices can even approach what distributors get for action-adventure hours in some territories."
[22]

By 1991, *Rescue 911* could be seen in Germany, Denmark, and Sweden; *Unsolved Mysteries* was available in Canada, Spain, France, and Japan.

However, many more shows have been formatted because of their topical or local nature. This method involves selling or licensing the program's concept for local production with local subjects. U.S. program footage may be sold as well to supplement the local version. As Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins note, the challenge for contemporary media distributors

"is to transcend vestigial national difference and to create standardized global markets, whilst remaining sensitive to the peculiarities of local markets and differentiated consumer segments." [23]

Reali-TV has participated in this strategy of "global localization." Fremantle, a distributor of game shows and *Candid Camera*, provides a good example of how formatting works. Fremantle's C.E.O. maintains that the company

"operates in foreign markets like McDonald's does...There are Fremantle subsidiaries in some countries; in others there are franchise-holders who produce their own local versions of the original product."
[24]

Home and hidden video shows tend to be formatted rather than licensed, allowing foreign broadcasters to insert their own clips into the programs. Crime-time shows

have also been formatted: the Swedes have developed a version of *Cops*, and *America's Most Wanted* was transformed into the short-lived *Australia's Most Wanted* some years back. Tabloid TV programs also have been formatted or customized because they tend to be the most indigenous. Notes one executive producer,

"In syndication, shows tend to be more topical and current...but they have to be more timeless for that backend revenue." [25]

Reali-TV's growth abroad has been aided by the widespread movement to privatize and deregulate broadcasting. As one distributor puts it:

"With some exceptions, public service broadcasters have always kept a tight lid on the definition of reality...The taste (for Reali-TV) has been stimulated abroad by increased commercialism, but reality shows haven't yet taken hold *en masse*...But because foreign broadcasters are tight for money, the attraction of reality will no doubt be considerable." [26]

Although both private and public broadcasters have purchased Reali-TV, the genre's growth is especially symptomatic of the need for public broadcasters increasingly to operate according to the logic of private channels, as competition for audiences and funding mounts. [27] In addition, the explosion of distribution channels in the 1980s was not only an U.S. phenomenon, but a global one; hence, some of the same cost pressures encountered by U.S. producers are being felt abroad. To better adapt to the globalizing television market, some Reali-TV has been conceived for international audiences first. Time-Warner/HBO's *World Entertainment Report*, for example, was pre-licensed across Europe, Australia, and Japan. The program has a modular format which broadcasters can recompose to fit their needs, inserting local entertainment coverage if desired. In 1992, Talbot TV was planning *Inside Interpol*, the ultimate in global crime-time, involving reenactments of crimes handled by the international investigative agency.

The international spread of Reali-TV cannot be explained as the outcome of U.S. product innovation, since many European and Japanese programs pre-dated their U.S. counterparts. The top-rated U.S. tabloid, *A Current Affair*, was developed in Australia 20 years ago. *Crimewatch UK*, which reconstructs crimes and asks for viewers' assistance, preceded *America's Most Wanted* and *Unsolved Mysteries*, as did a similar Dutch program. An Italian game show that features couples airing their grievances against each other with the support of invited friends (a studio audience votes for the "winner") has been formatted for U.S. audiences. These transborder flows suggest that programs that appear to be products of rapid U.S. innovation when glimpsed from the national perspective are actually the result of an international circulation, and recirculation, of products through globalized media markets.

For example, the widely-formatted *America's Funniest Home Videos* was itself inspired by segments of the Japanese variety show *Fun Television with Kato-chan and Ken-chan*, which broadcasts humorous videos sent in by viewers. King World's revival of *Candid Camera* for foreign and domestic syndication, an attempt to capitalize on the success of *America's Funniest Home Videos*, similarly suggests that there is as much recycling of program formats as rapid innovation at work

here. If U.S. television has always mixed the shock of the new with the familiarity of the formulaic, Reali-TV seems to indicate that U.S. producers are looking further abroad for "new" ideas, then repackaging them for domestic and international audiences. To the extent that the spread of the genre represents a "victory" for U.S.-based media producers, it is a packaging and marketing triumph.

CONCLUSION: WHAT PRICE REALITY?

U.S. television underwent a dramatic restructuring in the 1980s, largely precipitated by changing patterns of distribution with the spread of cable and VCRs. As the networks' oligopolistic control over the distribution of television programming was challenged, audience ratings shares fragmented. Producers faced smaller license and syndication fees from an expanded customer base, which now included not only the networks, but local independent stations, cable networks and superstations, and first-run distributors. Confronted with rapidly rising above-the-line production costs, producers took it out on below-the-line labor, and sought cheaper forms of programming. Reali-TV fit the bill. Networks stepped in to produce what examples of this programming the FCC would allow (news magazines for the big three, all forms for Fox) and co-produced what kinds they were not permitted to own and syndicate under the finsyn rules, hoping they would be in a better position to negotiate for ownership rights when the rules were repealed. Reali-TV made a splash in Europe and Japan in the late 1980s and early 1990s as well, but many U.S. programs of this kind that were licensed and formatted abroad drew on foreign models in the first place. Thus, we should understand Reali-TV not merely as a radical generic innovation but as a recirculation of product among global media corporations.

By the beginning of the 1994 television season, there were signs that this programming trend was leveling off in the U.S., at least on primetime network schedules, if not in first-run syndication.[28] Whereas 14 such series were developed for the 1992-93 season, only six were trickling down the pipe for 1994-95. There were a number of reasons for the decline. First, the tabloid shows failed to compete with game shows on the basis of production costs and ratings.[29] Second, television programmers' famous taste for imitation meant that their schedules were already saturated with Reali-TV. Third, just as the networks seemed assured of a total repeal of the finance and syndication rules, Reali-TV was garnering disappointingly low profits in off-network syndication markets, suggesting that the genre's topicality and timeliness made it less attractive to audiences the second time around.[30] Finally, advertisers were also growing wary of the genre. In part, advertisers became concerned about associating their products with the sexual and violent content in some programs of this ilk. More important, Reali-TV was not attracting enough affluent eighteen to thirty-five year olds, appealing more to pre-teens, seniors, and low-income viewers. These demographics forced the networks to sell advertising time on many Reali-TV shows at a discount compared with other programs with similar ratings and shares.

Nonetheless, Reali-TV is still with us, and continues to raise questions for television studies. Let me suggest briefly how we might draw connections between this genre and recent political-economic and cultural developments in U.S. life. The rise of the "crime-time/emergency services" programs, in particular, is clearly related to the increasing law and order conservatism of the past ten years. Whether

the relationship is more one of agenda-setting or cultural reflection, these programs are closely linked to the growing needs of state agencies to foreground and manage their public images in hopes of attracting resources in an era of budget deficits; to the public relations activities of those who would privatize prisons; to the need to legitimate an unprecedented growth in the number of incarcerated Americans, thanks to the "War on Drugs" and mandatory sentencing laws; and, following the Rodney King video, to a need to excuse the new visibility of (the same old) police brutality.

Many Reali-TV programs are produced by former law enforcement officers, and most have fulltime police consultants. Debra Seagal, a former tape logger for *American Detective*, has recently described how producers of the now-defunct program routinely excised scenes of police brutality or trampling on the civil rights of suspects.[31] Mary Beth Oliver has shown that, like most television, these shows massively over-represent violent crimes (murder, rape, assault) versus crimes against property.[32] The greatest irony of the crime-time shows is that, in an industry that argues vehemently against government censorship of sex and violence, every episode of *Cops* is vetted by police before airing to ensure "accurate portrayals" of police work.

Those who celebrate television texts as inspiring an active, participatory viewership that is inherently progressive or popular need to confront the "active viewer" brought forth by crime-time programs. Among the most active are those viewers who respond to televised appeals to help law enforcement by dialing up hotlines to report sightings of fugitives and runaways. Aside from providing another information subsidy to the producers (who routinely air their tally of fugitives the program has helped to arrest, and follow-up stories on them), the solicitation of tips fosters a surveillance mentality. This kind of audience activity is not devoted to negotiating or resisting the dominant ideology in the text, but to embracing and acting upon it wholeheartedly. That some fugitives portrayed have not been formally charged with a crime, and have a right to freedom from prejudicial pre-trial publicity, as well as to privacy, is not often mentioned on these hunt-a-thons.

Reali-TV has also played a role in the redefinition of public service programming. In the Reagan-Bush climate of lax regulation, programmers did not need to fear FCC scrutiny of the violence and sexual content of Reali-TV, avoiding the costs of in-house standards and practices departments' close screening of these programs, and potential legal costs of defending them before the FCC. In addition, many Reali-TV producers recast broadcasters' "public service" and "educational" responsibilities to champion the civic value of their programs. Producers ignored traditional definitions of serving the public interest, which focused more on the discussion of public affairs, coverage of local issues, and developing children's intellectual or emotional abilities. Instead, the creators of crime-time programs in particular touted their public contribution as prompting citizens to help law enforcement officers track down their quarry. The executive producer of *America's Most Wanted* opined to *The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*:

"I believe we are witnessing the birth of a new era in citizen involvement. *America's Most Wanted* has organized some 22 million viewers into the first nationwide neighborhood watch association." [33]

In this vision of public service, surveillance of criminals replaces debate over public

affairs, an oxymoronic "nationwide neighborhood watch association" offers a false sense of localism, and education is reduced to instructing viewers on how to avoid becoming a crime victim.

If there is a master trope for each Reali-TV format — crime time/emergency, home video, hidden video, tabloid, and newsmagazine — it may be participatory democracy. Popular participation in television programming is represented through Reali-TV's widespread use of hotlines which beckon viewers to participate in law enforcement as detectives or judges of others' guilt, through its celebration of a (highly professionally-constructed) amateur aesthetic in the increasing use of home video, through its offers to nonprofessionals to perform on camera, and through its claims of "democratizing" taste in news. Hence, Reali-TV is a critical site for engaging the central questions for contemporary television studies. When does the aesthetic of the popular become an administered populism? When is the popular reactionary? On whose terms are we allowed to participate in television production? Enquiring minds want to know.

NOTES

1. Thanks to Rick Maxwell, Chuck Kleinhans, and David Tetzlaff for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.
2. Given space limits, I restrict my discussion to the distinctive political-economy of primetime series, putting aside made-for-tv docudramas and entire cable channels (such as Court TV) which may share similar production practices and genres.
3. The earliest use of this term I have encountered is in Ed Siegel, "It's Not Fiction. It's Not News. It's *Not* Reality. It's Reali-TV," *The Boston Globe*, May 26, 1991, p. A1.
4. In 1985 and 1986, after more than twenty years of stable ownership, all three networks changed hands, succumbing to the frenzy of corporate mergers and internationalization which characterized the decade. In 1985, Capital Cities took control of ABC; in 1986, General Electric purchased NBC and Laurence Tisch's Loews Corp assumed effective control over CBS. In addition, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp bought Twentieth Century Fox Studios and the Multimedia chain of independent television stations, using both to start a fourth network in 1986. Ken Auletta, *Three Blind Mice: How the TV Networks Lost Their Way* (New York: Random House, 1991.)
5. John Downing, "The Political Economy of U.S. Television," *Monthly Review* (May 1990), pp. 30-41.
6. Harold L. Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2nd ed., 1990), p. 171.
7. Patricia Bauer, "Production Scene: Hollywood's New Low-End Market," *Channels* 6, no. 8 (1986):14.
8. Prior to the 1986 restructuring of federal tax laws, producers were able to deduct 6.7 percent of the cost of their productions from their federal tax bills.

9. Bauer, 14.

10. For information on the staff cutbacks at the networks, and the NABET strike see Downing, 37-38; J. Max Robins, "Hired guns take over local news," *Variety*, September 24, 1990, p. 21. The censors' expendability was linked to the loose regulatory climate under the Reagan-era FCC. While self-censorship had been an important part of the networks' long-term strategy for averting government intervention in private broadcasting, the FCC largely ignored regulating content in the 1980s. The networks' real risks now emerged from angry viewers pressuring affiliates and advertisers to remove material from the air. Increasingly, content regulation was left to the market to decide.

11. Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990, 2nd ed.), p. 488.

12. On core and periphery labor forces in the Hollywood entertainment industry, see Susan Christopherson and Michael Storper, "The Effects of Flexible Specialization on Industrial Politics and the Labor Market: the Motion Picture Industry," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 42, no. 3(1989): 331-347.

13. Bauer, 14.

14. Downing, 39.

15. On the role of agent-packagers, see Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), pp. 143-157.

16. On the Arthur Co., see Bauer, 14. On *America's Most Wanted*, see Daniel R. White, "America's Most Wanted," *ABA Journal* (October, 1989): 94. On Street Stories, see J. Max Robins, "Producers for Hire." *Variety*, February 24, 1992: 81.

17. Robins, "Producers for Hire," 81.

18. See Scott A. Nelson, "Crime-Time Televison," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (August, 1989): 5.

19. On the role of information subsidies in news selection, see Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Information in Health: Subsidised News," *Media, Culture and Society* 2 (1980): 103-115.

20. On the constraints faced by "independent" film producers, see Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, "Hollywood for the 21st Century: Global Competition for Critical Mass in Image Markets." Unpublished manuscript, Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1991. On the similar financial dependence of small TV producers, see Vogel, 117; Gitlin, 136.

21. The finsyn rules had never been applied to Fox as the FCC did not define it as a network since it distributed less than 15 hours a week of programming.

22. Elizabeth Guider, "Yanks deal for real," *Variety*, June 3, 1991: 35.

23. Aksoy and Robins, 34-35. 24. Ibid, 1.

25. James McBride, "On-scene' shows flood airwaves." *Variety*, June 3, 1991: 32.
26. Guider, 75.
27. See Graham Murdock, "Television and Citizenship: In Defence of Public Broadcasting," in A. Tomlinson, ed., *Consumption, Identity, and Style* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 77-101; Paddy Scannell, "Public Service Broadcasting: The History of a Concept," in Andrew Goodwin & Gary Whannel, eds., *Understanding Television* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 11-29.
28. Steve Coe, "Reality 1994," *Broadcasting and Cable*, May 9, 1994: 29-30; David Tobenkin, "Reality Still Going Strong in Syndication," *Broadcasting and Cable*, May 9, 1994: 34-5.
29. In 1991, production costs for *A Current Affair*, *Hard Copy*, *Inside Edition*, *Entertainment Tonight*, and other tabloid shows were estimated as ranging from about \$350,000 to \$500,000 per week, whereas the game shows that were their main competition (*Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy*, for example) cost an estimated \$100,000 to \$150,000 per week (John Dempsey, "Hot Genre Gluts TV Market," *Variety*, June 3, 1991: 32.) Although the tabloids garner solid enough ratings, none have ever matched the audience shares drawn by the top game shows.
30. *Unsolved Mysteries*, a top ratings winner in primetime, was offered in re-edited and often updated versions for off-network syndication in the spring of 1991, but made no money for its distributor. "Reality shows have a short shelf life," one programmer notes, "they just don't seem to sell well in syndication." Another comments that watching Reali-TV reruns is like "reading yesterday's news" (Dempsey, 32). Although the networks would not have cared whether a program was attractive for syndication under the old finsyn rules, they will begin to think more like syndicators now that they are freer to control off-network syndication. That could mean a turn to fewer, or at least less topical, Reali-TV programs.
31. Debra Seagal, "Tales From the Cutting Room Floor," *Harper's Magazine* (November, 1993), pp. 50-57.
32. Mary Beth Oliver, "Portrayals of Crime, Race, and Aggression in 'Reality-Based' Police Shows: A Content Analysis," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 38 (Spring, 1994): 179-92.
33. Nelson, 8.

TABLE 1: PRIME-TIME REALI-TV PROGRAMS AT START OF 1991-92 SEASON

Program/Network/Minutes/Producers/Deficit/License Fee per Episode

Am. Funniest Home Vid/ABC/30/ABC Prods+Vin di Bona Prods/\$0/\$375,000

Am. Funniest People/ABC/30/ABC Prods+Vin di Bona Prods/\$0/\$300,000

Amer. Detective/ABC/30/ABC+Orion TV+Paul Stojanovich/\$0/\$450,000

FBI: The Untold Stories/ABC/30/The Arthur Co./\$25,000/\$450,000

Primetime Live/ABC/60/ABC News/\$0/\$500,000

20-20/ABC/60/ABC News/\$0/\$500,000

48 Hours/CBS/60/CBS News/\$0/\$500,000

Rescue 911/CBS/30/Arnold Shapiro Prods+CBS Ent./\$0/\$650,000

60 Minutes/CBS/60/CBS News/\$0/\$600,000

Top Cops/CBS/60/CBS News/\$0/\$650,000

Expose/NBC/30/NBC News/\$0/\$300,000

Real Life w. Jane Pauley/NBC/30/NBC News/\$0/\$300,000

Unsolved Mysteries/NBC/60/Cosgrove-Meurer Prods/\$0/\$800,000

America's Most Wanted/Fox/60/STF Prods/\$0/\$500,000

Cops/Fox/30/Barbour-Langley Prods+Fox TV/\$0/\$325,000

Cops II/Fox/30/Barbour-Langley Prods+Fox TV/\$0/\$325,000

Totally New — Totally Hidden Video/Fox/30/STF Productions/\$0/\$500,000

Source: *Variety*, August 26, 1991, pp. 48-54

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Strawberry and Chocolate Melodrama, sex, and the Cuban revolution

by John Hess

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Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's penultimate film, *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE* (1993) has been a popular success in Cuba, Europe and here in the United States. [1][[open notes in new window](#)] The film tells the story of David Alvarez, a naive, repressed university student and member of the Union of Communist Youth. One day Diego, a gay photographer and intellectual, picks up David at Coppelia, Havana's famous ice cream parlor and renowned cruising spot. Physically attracted to David, Diego hopes to seduce the younger man. David, a would-be writer, feels drawn to Diego's knowledge of literature and art and by older man's collection of hard (or impossible) to find books in Cuba, including those of the revolution's supporter turned critic, Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru) and gay writers José Lezama Lima (Cuba) and Juan Goytisolo (Spain).

Soon, however, David makes it clear that he is straight; a friendship develops between the two men, based on their shared interest in art and literature, Diego essentially becoming David's tutor. However, David's passage to manhood or maturity remains blocked by his inability to consummate a sexual relationship, dramatically represented in the opening pre-credit sequence. Here too Diego becomes involved: he helps engineer David's relationship with Nancy, his neighbor and close friend, going so far as to offer Nancy money to sleep with David. In the end, going to bed with Nancy gives David enough self-confidence to stand up for his gay friend in public and to take possession of Nancy. Diego, the no longer needed teacher, leaves Cuba. In what follows I want to examine how Gutiérrez Alea tells this story and to critique the film's problematic sexual politics, showing how the film's clichéd melodrama, whatever the director's intent, reproduces Cuba's homophobic and sexist ideologies.

My disappointment with and critique of the film may seem harsh in light of the film's considerable popularity and its encouragement of open discussion about homosexuality in Cuba. In fact, many viewers and critics have celebrated the film as a progressive, humanistic call for greater Cuban tolerance toward and understanding of gays and lesbians.

"It [the film] unleashed a popular discourse about a culturally tabooed

and politically repressed issue that went beyond the confines of the film itself...Both homosexuals and homosexual oppression became visible in a totally new way. In a sense, the release of the film was also a concession by the regime that its homophobic policies have been counterproductive."[2]

This film (like many others that deal with social issues in melodramatic form) evokes contradictory responses. For example, we can understand the film's popularity in Cuba as deriving from the filmmaker's ability to represent a difficult contemporary issue in a way that made many Cubans feel sympathy or pity for a persecuted character and at the same time good about themselves. Some, perhaps many, Cubans saw and appreciated the film as a wider critique of the Cuban government's narrow-minded, puritan control of cultural and personal life. Gutiérrez Alea clearly indicates the strong presence of a repressive apparatus behind the scenes, monitoring many aspects of Cuban life. Also, it must have pleased many Cubans to see the first positive representation of homosexuality in a Cuban feature film. Outside Cuba, many people, gay and straight, have enjoyed seeing a well-made film with such a positive gay male character, a film that casts off the older, negative stereotypes we are all so used to seeing.

Audiences often take melodramatic representations of culturally and politically marginalized people as far more progressive than the representations really are, both because they represent people on screen whom we usually don't see there and because they refuse the most common, most negative stereotypes. We can easily critique such melodrama by looking at older work with contemporary eyes: noting atrocious gay stereotypes in Rossellini's famous neorealist classic, *ROME, OPEN CITY* (1945) or, going back further, noble savage stereotypes in King Vidor's effort to represent authentic black culture in *HALLELUJAH* (1929). In the 1970s, melodramas like *BOYS IN THE BAND* and *NORMA RAY* offended many gay or labor activists while appealing to the broader target audiences because the films were appropriately sentimental and traded in familiar stereotypes.

NEW LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA

Like many of the post-New Latin American Cinema films, *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE* mixes or overlays two sets of generic elements—from the art film and melodrama. As an art film, it clearly has remnants of New Latin American Cinema. Gutiérrez Alea clearly made a "serious" film to encourage tolerance for homosexuals or anyone who is different—including religious believers, lovers of art, and misfits. In this regard, the director deserves enormous credit. Already ill from cancer, he summoned his considerable personal and artistic powers to make a statement that few, if any others, in ICAIC (the Cuban Film Institute) could make. In fact, as Ian Lumsden reports, ICAIC permitted this project while "it simultaneously blocked all attempts by its gay members...to produce work with gay themes." [3] Gutiérrez Alea uses a familiar didactic structure, the *Bildungsroman*, the education of an innocent into the ways of the world. The narrative's double openendedness plays a key role in this didactic structure.

First, David, the Communist, has entered into a serious relation with Nancy, a former prostitute many years his senior, a black marketeer, a religious believer (in both Christianity and Santería). It is hard to imagine how such contradictory people might live in Cuba, how David might remain a member of the Communist

Party while also remaining true to Nancy. Second, Miguel has viciously attacked David, calling him a faggot and threatening political consequences. Such serious charges would certainly have damaged if not destroyed a young man like David's career, especially in 1979 when the film is set. By leaving unresolved such powerful enigmas having to do with David's future, the director hopes to generate reflection and interaction among the audience members, who hopefully will discuss the film later.

From all the evidence, it seems that Gutiérrez Alea succeeded. The film was immensely popular in Cuba and may become the most seen film in Cuban film history.[4] (However, Brandon Judell asserts that while the film "attracted more than million moviegoers in Havana, it was allowed to play only a few days in other parts of the country, if at all." [5] In the U.S. a documentary film GAY CUBA (Sonja de Vries, USA/Cuba, 1995) contains a short section on STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE in which several gay Cubans comment positively on the film and discuss its importance in advancing Cuba's discussion. Brief interviews with people waiting in long lines to get into the film seem to bear out these comments. [See following review of that documentary.]

Like New Latin American Cinema films, STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE intervenes in a national debate on the side of a more progressive outcome. It forms part of a more general and official Cuban effort to change Cuba's notorious anti-homosexual policies and image. By the early 1990s, these policies had already begun to change in significant ways. According to Marvin Leiner,

"Life for gay people in Cuba had improved considerably by the mid-and late 1980s." [6]

He quotes from a 1988 National Lawyers Guild report based on interviews with Cuban gays and lesbians:

"They are not fearful of being identified as homosexual and have many more opportunities for employment. Continued homophobia is blamed on societal values and not on official policy" (ibid. 50).

In early 1992 as Gutiérrez Alea began to work on STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE, a play based on the same Senal Paz story had sold-out performances in Havana for two months. Also in 1992, in an official publication of the Cuban government, Fidel Castro stated he was

"absolutely opposed to all forms of oppression, contempt, scorn, or discrimination with regard to homosexuals" (ibid. 59).

If homophobia had not ended, homosexuality had become a public issue and the government had begun to push for greater tolerance, if not understanding. In this context STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE, on the surface at least, becomes part of government policy rather than a radical departure or critique. Cuban writer Reynaldo Gonzalez makes just this point in analyzing the film's political position:

"Given how Cuban films are produced and distributed, it is evident, without official approval, a film like *Fresa y chocolate*, which does not limit itself to narrating a story but goes on to pass judgment on things

which have been done, could never have been made or shown."[7]

Gonzalez sees the film as coming out of a context in which the government seeks to make up for

"errors that Cuban and foreign intellectuals and critics have reminded it of repeatedly and which have cost it the sympathy of many important supporters" (ibid.).

All this remains surface didacticism, understandable to anyone familiar with the changes that have been taking place in Cuba regarding gays, lesbians and the whole issue of homosexuality. However, Gonzalez also says the film does more than support government policy; it

"points an accusing finger at intolerance in its broadest form. It digs deeper than any film has before and it provokes reflections that go much farther than simply the anguish of a single marginalized community" (ibid. 16).

In other words, according to Gonzalez, the film uses a government-approved but socially tricky defense of homosexuals to launch a broader, unsanctioned attack on other government policies of the recent past. Importantly, in culturally limited, even repressive societies, audiences adeptly read subtleties in conventional, stereotyped representations — the only kind permitted. Local audiences see such works (e.g., much Eastern European cinema in the 1960s and 70s, and Brazilian "Tropicalism" in the late 1960s and 70s) as resistant and progressive, while in other countries these films' stereotyping seems to weaken that cinema as social critique.

Gutiérrez Alea offers a very broad critique — against past Cuban repression of artistic culture and political debate. The film's title sequence sets it in 1979, a time just before the 1980 Mariel exodus and the acknowledgment of AIDS, and a time of vicious oppression of out gays and lesbians in Cuba.[8] Cultural bureaucrats marginalized many intellectuals and artists; cultural institutions and the universities were often purged of people not having the appropriate "moral qualities" demanded by the 1971 Congress on Education and Culture (ibid. 16). Thus *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE*'s real political bite, according to Gonzalez, comes from its broadly targeting the marginalization of intellectuals and artists in the 1970s. He suggests, but does not say that sovietized cultural bureaucrats purged cultural institutions and universities to serve a narrow, muscular, puritan notion of culture, which allowed the conflation of any sensitivity to culture beyond prescribed, narrow boundaries with homosexuality. After all, intellectuals would find it more difficult to defend one another against charges of homosexuality and moral turpitude than against charges of insufficient obeisance to socialist realism, against which Che Guevara had spoken so forcefully in the mid-1960s. If this is the case, it helps explain the film's strange conflation of homosexuality and the life of the independent intellectual.

We can see this conflation in the film's mise-en-scene, especially that of Diego's apartment in Old Havana, the location of real desire in the film. By this I mean that Diego and especially his apartment represent the forbidden and therefore also highly desirable image of the bohemian, of the independent intellectual. The first time David enters this space, he stands in awe. His eyes, in a clearly established

point-of-view shot, lovingly scan the walls, covered with all manner of art (photos, paintings, clippings from periodicals, parts of colonial wrought-iron decorations, wooden cherubs and angels) and the shelves filled with books, magazines, sound tapes, small figures and other objets d'art. In one corner stands an elaborate altar with a large statue of a saint. On the floor are plaster busts of religious figures, done by Diego's friend German.

Diego plays music, ranging from opera star Maria Callas to Cuban New Song star Sara Gonzales. Diego talks about John Donne, Cafavi, Lezama Lima, and José Martí, of whom he also has a picture on the wall. On one wall someone has painted a huge, very sensuous image, looking like the midriff of a male body covered only partially by a cloth. As Diego goes to fix coffee, David begins to explore the apartment, supposedly looking for photos which Diego said he had of David. Instead, David finds photos of naked young men. David has a strong desire to know this very mysterious world, and his fascination draws him back time and again to this apartment in spite of the obvious dangers.

With considerable sensual power here and elsewhere in the film (especially in those several scenes in which Diego instructs David and teaches him to really *see* Havana, to really observe the life around him), Gutiérrez Alea conveys his feelings about the life of the independent intellectual and significantly about the course he himself struggled to follow throughout his adult life. He never joined the party or took leadership positions in the film institute or cultural bureaucracy. As Cuba's premiere film director he could have easily left to make films in many other countries. But he stayed, worked, taught others, and always cast a critical cinematic eye on the revolution he supported but wanted to make better. However, though the film has Gutiérrez Alea's subtle critique of the government's repression of intellectuals and artists in the 1970s, this theme is only implied. It becomes buried under the melodramatic story of David's sexual development.

STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE AS MELODRAMA

STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE is not just an art film with roots in New Latin American Cinema. It is also a readerly film and a melodrama.[9] It has none of the Brechtian distancing devices of *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* (1968) or even the juxtapositions between the fictional sequences proper and the video documentary footage (though completely diegetic) Gutiérrez Alea used in *UP TO A POINT* (1984). When asked about this difference, the director responded somewhat wistfully that *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT*

"is not a fiction film that can be located somewhere in fantasy. But I think you make films because you want to express something to the largest audience possible. So you use a language that can reach that audience." [10]

As a readerly film, however, *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE* is constructed out of quickly grasped clichés and stereotypes — none more obvious than the stereotype that associates gay men with a passion for and sensitivity to culture and refinement. How different the film would be, for example, if David were the homosexual rather than the more mature and cultured Diego. For example, this would place the issue of homosexuality within the ranks of the Communist Party. It would also undermine the classic cliché of the cultured gay man seducing the naive

younger man.

At the core of *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE* we find the story of David's political, cultural, and sexual awakening. I want to look at how one can imagine such an awakening in Cuba today and how this conventional story will be sexually and politically figured. As Julia Lesage wrote about a much earlier readerly film,

"Male and female film characters are assigned certain familiar, recognizable sexual traits, which provide a ready way of expressing the culture's commonly-held sexual fantasies." [11]

CHARACTERS, PLOTS, AND SEXUAL TRAITS

STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE creates an interesting configuration of characters with clearly marked sexual, political and cultural traits that revolve around the central character, David Alvarez. In fact, the film establishes clear oppositions between two sets of characters, one male, the other female. On the one hand, are Miguel, a clearly macho and more mature Communist student at the University, who sends David on a mission to spy on the other male figure, his opposite, Diego, the highly cultured gay photographer who has lost his illusions about the Revolution and eventually must leave Cuba to maintain his humanity. On the other hand, are Vivian and Nancy. Vivian, the conventional woman David loves and pursues unsuccessfully throughout most of the film, expects macho behavior from him and marries an older, successful man, because she wants to "live well" and "begin a family immediately." Her opposite, Diego's neighbor and soulmate Nancy, is a former prostitute, practicing Catholic and Santera, and black marketeer who has frequently attempted suicide. Interestingly, Nancy was not in Senal Paz's original story from which the film is made.

Miguel and Vivian are upwardly mobile conformists who live out their prescribed, conventional sex roles within a Revolution that they see only in terms of its bureaucratic structures, rules and regulations. They represent the continued vitality of small-minded, pre-revolutionary petit-bourgeois values within the Revolution. Neither shows any interest in culture or any sensitivity to those around them — especially David, whom they powerfully influence early in the film. In contrast, Diego and Nancy are outsiders and rebels. They live as downwardly mobile nonconformists, who are warm, loving, sensitive, eclectic in their tastes and who see the Revolution in terms of the personal and their lost ideals.

Within this constellation of static, and for Gutiérrez Alea dysfunctional, stereotypes we find David, in all senses a virgin — politically, culturally, and sexually — a *tabula rasa*. [12] Who, we wonder, will write on him and what will they write? It seems fair to say that while Gutiérrez Alea's primary interest here is cultural politics, sex serves to make that discussion more lively, appealing to a mass audience. However sex is never just sex. To quote Lesage again:

"Persistent configurations of assigned sexual traits have a vitality in contemporary film because these patterns emerge from and serve to reinforce patriarchal social relations in the world outside the film. Fictional sexuality parallels the real, options that hegemonic male culture would like to continue offering men and women today, and real power differentials exist between the sexes" (235).

SEXUALITY

The oppositions that Gutiérrez Alea sets up regarding both male and female sexuality are complicated (or clarified) by two other characters, who operate to seal off his left flank, so to speak; they serve to "normalize" for the audience what might at first glance appear too extreme. In the opening scene in the posada, the room-by-the-hour hotel where David and Vivian have gone for sex, while Vivian is preparing herself in the adjacent bathroom, David, drawn by a woman's orgiastic groans, looks through a peephole into the next room. There he sees a huge breasted woman in the throes of ecstasy, wildly riding her faceless lover's inert body. This image of energetic female sexual agency is so disconcerting to David that he fussily and obsessively rearranges things in the room and fails to consummate a sexual relation with Vivian. This extreme image of female sexuality counters and normalizes Nancy's later seduction of David, which appears very romantic though she is a former prostitute.

In a similar manner, Diego's gay sexuality is countered and domesticated, so to speak, by German's much more flamboyant queen or *loca* mannerisms. Asked by Dennis West if Diego represented a stereotypical *loca*, Gutiérrez Alea protested,

"No, no. He's definitely not a stereotype. Diego is not really even a *loca*. The equivalent in English of *loca* is 'queen' — a gay who expresses himself in a very extroverted, very spectacular manner, who flaunts his homosexuality. His homosexuality is at the center of his social being. Diego, on the other hand, is a gay [or guy ?-JH] who has other concerns. He is a refined and cultivated man who is relatively mature, and he conducts himself as a normal person" (18).

Here Gutiérrez Alea repeats and thus reinforces the dreadfully cruel opposition between "normal" and "spectacular" behavior, an opposition institutionalized in the closet. Cultural bureaucrats buy off German, thus conflating his *loca* behavior and cowardice (another meaning of *maricón*). German's presence insures Diego's "normality" (he's not like German) but robs Diego of his sexuality.

POSSESSING A VIRGIN

Maricón, usually translated as "faggot" in the film, has a restricted and specific meaning in Cuban sexual culture: a *maricón* is a man who is penetrated by another man. Within Cuban machismo, fucking another man does not necessarily identify a man as homosexual; only being fucked does, i.e., being in the passive role, being a woman. Interestingly, in *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE* both Miguel and Diego symbolically possess David in a way that makes him a *maricón*. After David and Diego have drunk "the enemy's whiskey" to their new friendship, we see Miguel helping David vomit in their dorm's large shower stall. Both are dressed only in brief underwear and Miguel stands behind David with his arms around him. He slaps David's ass, commenting on its voluptuousness. At least, one critic noticed the implications:

"The play of light across the sweat on the half naked bodies eroticizes them at the same time as Miguel's militantly homophobic pronouncements make it all 'safe'"[13]

After another bout of drinking after his final good-bye from Vivian, David lies shirtless with his pants partially open on Diego's couch. Diego's erotic gaze moves from David's curly locks, across his beautiful face and hairy chest to his open fly — pure beefcake. Finally, Diego lovingly covers David with a blanket and goes into the next room to ask Nancy to initiate the youth into sex!

A young man, described by Gutiérrez Alea as an *ephebus* — a virginal youth in ancient Greece — was stunned by a vision of female sexuality and unable to perform with Vivian; he then becomes prey to the eyes and bodies of more powerful males. The feminized, vulnerable, androgynous body becomes an erotic turn-on for both straight and gay men, becomes the *maricón*. The only way David can "redeem" himself is through heterosexual sex. Doing this, he also redeems those around him by exercising power over them.

REVOLUTIONARY REDEMPTION

An important motif of redemption runs through this film. David gives his blood to Nancy in the hospital after she has tried to kill herself. Later, just before she hangs herself in front of a Beatles poster, she realizes that she really does want to sleep with David. She climbs down, showers and prays that he will find her attractive. Nancy also tells the Santero she visits for advice that in spite of her checkered past, David will find something clean in her. David, having slept with Nancy and ending his embarrassing virginity, is now able to go into public space with Diego, to Coppelia where they first met, and even to imitate Diego's effeminate appreciation of strawberry ice cream.^[14] This new male confidence compels Diego to confess his plot to seduce David and also that he often asked David for hugs, because he thought that it would "make him clean."

Thus in the projected fantasy lives of the film's two most interesting and attractive characters, the gay intellectual and the independent woman, only heterosexuality, only acquiescing to straight male domination can redeem them. This narrative structure resembles that of Hollywood melodrama, in which the absence of a strong patriarchal figure often leads to sexual and emotional chaos, which only a patriarch's return can redeem. Here only David, whose primary claim to importance is a working penis and heterosexual desire, can bring order. But what sort of order is this? One that requires the purging of the independent intellectual (and gay man) and the subjugation of the independent woman.

MALE OPTIONS UNDER SOCIALISM

As *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE* sketches out male options under Cuban socialism, they are surprisingly similar to what we find in capitalist cultures. There is a strong opposition between the macho, whose power comes ultimately from his conformity to state power (represented by Miguel) and the outsider, the artist figure, ultimately the romantic hero of 19th century literature and 20th century film. Diego's apartment is a combination of religious shrine, library, and art gallery. He is the soft, feminized lover of art and culture. Instead of the unattainable women, he pursues the equally unattainable straight man. His revolt against the Cuban cultural establishment fails, German abandons him, and eventually he must flee the country.

These options are placed before David. Gutiérrez Alea wants us to see that David's

development draws (must draw) from both these masculine positions. But the film's unification of apparently opposed traits — David's becoming the committed revolutionary who loves beauty and sensitivity — requires exorcising homosexuality and subjugating women. Diego must forgo and hide his sexuality and then leave, while Nancy comes under David's protection. When the men get together at Moro Castle and joke about sex, Diego says that while Nancy is tough on the outside, she is really like a sparrow that can be easily hurt. David's appropriately macho response?

"No one will do that. She is with me now."

Gutiérrez Alea struggles here to imagine a joining of revolutionary commitment and the life of the independent intellectual in David Alvarez — a position he himself fought to maintain throughout his career. The cost, however, is very high. As the film exorcises male love and female intelligence and independence, its conclusion shows the emptiness, loneliness, and the clear sense of loss which David experiences — perfectly and terribly expressed by the final image of David's anguished, tear stained face.

NOTES

I presented an earlier version of this analysis at the Fifth Conference on Latin American Popular Culture at Tulane University in October, 1996 and want to thank Ana Lopez and Studies in Latin American Popular Culture for that opportunity. I would also like to thank my film theory students at Ithaca College who joined me in analyzing this film last fall. Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to Michael Chanan, Chuck Kleinhans, Julia Lesage, and Tom Waugh for their feedback and advice during the final writing process.

1. Though, like most other critics, I will discuss this film as a Gutiérrez Alea film, it is very important to point out that it was by all reports a close collaboration between him and Juan Carlos Tabío. Gutiérrez Alea was ill during much of the shooting and actually absent from Cuba during some of it. Juan Carlos Tabío played a major role in the completion of this film and deserves more credit that he will probably ever receive.

2. Ian Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) 194.

3. Ibid. 195.

4. See Dennis West, "*Strawberry and Chocolate*, Ice Cream and Tolerance: Interviews with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío," *Cineaste* 21.1-2 (1995): 16-20.

5. Brandon Judell, "The Flavor of Freedom," *10 Percent*, 3.12 (January, 1955): 38.

6. Marvin Leiner, *Sexual Politics in Cuba: Machismo, Homosexuality, and AIDS* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994) 49.

7. Reynaldo Gonzalez, "Meditation for a Debate, or Cuban Culture with the Taste of *Strawberry and Chocolate*," *CUBA Update*, 15.2 (May, 1994) 15.

8. In 1978 several JUMP CUT editors, including Julia Lesage and myself, visited Cuba on a trip organized by Tricontinental Films (who was then distributing Cuban films in the U.S.). In an effort to initiate a dialogue with the film people and intellectuals we met about homosexuality, we took about 50 copies of JUMP CUT #16, containing our first special section on homosexuality and film and our editorial supporting the gay liberation struggles then taking place here. In JUMP CUT #19 (Dec., 1978) we ran our first special section on Cuban cinema and included an editorial expressing both our support for the Cuban Revolution and our criticism of their repression of homosexuality.

9. I am borrowing Roland Barthes' distinction between the writerly and the readerly text. For him the writerly was the complex, avant-garde text that the reader had to become involved in and work to complete, while the readerly text consisted of easily consumed conventions and stereotypes that required only acceptance or rejection. See *S/Z, An Essay*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974): 4. Julia Lesage translated Barthes literary theory into film theory in "S/Z and RULES OF THE GAME." *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: UC Press, 1985): 476-500. (Originally in JUMP CUT, #12/13 [1976]).

10. Lawrence Chua, "I Scream, You Scream: Lawrence Chua Talks with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea," *Artforum International*, 33.4 (December 1, 1994): 102.

11. In this article I have closely followed the structure of Lesage's analysis of D. W. Griffith's *BROKEN BLOSSOMS* (1919), including using some of her subtitles. As I was working on this analysis, I was also teaching her article and was struck by the similar sexual politics in two otherwise very different films. Her article, "Artful Racism, Artful Rape, Griffith's *BROKEN BLOSSOMS*" can be found in JUMP CUT, No. 26(1981): 51-55; in *Jump Cut: Hollywood, Politics and Counter Cinema*, ed. Peter Steven (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1985) 247-269; and in *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI, 1987) 235-254. I am using this last source. This quote is on page 235.

12. Julia Lesage has reminded me of the similarities between Diego and the earlier Sergio in *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT*. Both are feminized men who are very cultured. Early in *MEMORIES* we see Sergio pull on some of his wife's clothing and pose in front of a mirror. One wonders what this fantasy means to Gutiérrez Alea. Is it, for example an appealing but forbidden image? Is it a part of his fantasy life which he knows can't be developed in Revolutionary and Macho Cuba? Is it a fear? In fact, most of Gutiérrez Alea's central male characters are feminized men who ultimately fail through exhaustion, lack of will, or incomprehension at film's end. Usually, they are able to hand off to or find some other center of responsibility, a role often played in the earlier films by the people/the masses. The optimism of the earlier films no longer lights up *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE*, leading to considerable sentimentality in the film.

13. Chris Berry, "Strawberry and Chocolate," *Filmnews* (Australia), 25.2 (April, 1995): 13. Miguel's "repressed" (homo)sexuality sets in motion two very common conventions. In left film after WW2 particularly, we find the theme, derived from the work of Wilhelm Reich, of repressed sexuality resulting in some form of authoritarianism (of the left in Makaveyev's *WR-MYSTRIES OF THE ORGANISM*(1971) and of the right in Bertolucci's *THE CONFORMIST*(1969) and

many other Italian films. In a common stereotype, we read extreme homophobic rhetoric as neurotic repression of the forbidden desire. Needless to say, these two conventions tell us more about the filmmaker's personal and cultural fantasies than about the real lives of homosexual artists and intellectuals in Cuba.

14. This is an interesting moment in the context of what Ian Lumsden says about "coming out" in Cuba. There "sexual orientation is inferred from gender identity . That means that if you behave "normally," everyone will "assume that you are basically heterosexual even if you have been known to have had sex with another man"(133). Conversely, if you display effeminate mannerisms, you will be assumed to be gay, even if people know nothing about your sex life. The issue is outward display, public behavior, carriage, posture.

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JUMP CUT

A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA

Gay Cuba

by John Hess

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Directed by Sonja de Vries, 1995. Available in 57 and 29-minute versions from Frameline, 346 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA, 94103. Frameline@aol.com and www.Frameline.org.

In this traditionally styled documentary the director intersperses talking-head interviews with musical interludes over montages of images or voice-over documentary sections. *GAY CUBA* is also a very moving film. The film taps into and gives voice to Cuban youth in a way which no other film I have seen does. These voices are passionate, excited, logical, thoughtful, and humane. The young gay men and lesbians have grown up inside the Cuban Revolution and reject its long governing machismo, stuffy bureaucracy and political Puritanism without rejecting the Revolution itself. Rather, they base their rejection on revolutionary principles. They have a refreshingly direct and clear-headed way of expressing obvious truths. "I don't have to sleep with a man to be a communist and a revolutionary," says one young lesbian matter of factly. How could anyone disagree? "I'd be really proud to have a friend like that," says a young straight man, referring to the gay character, Diego, in *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE*. To the extent that the Cuban Revolution can include and involve these young people in its project, its future looks better than most seem to think today.

Inspired, at least in part, by the opening that Tomás Gutierrez Alea's *STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE* (1993) created, the film also answers Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jimenez-Leal's *IMPROPER CONDUCT* (1984). These directors were embittered exiles, who were never known as advocates of gay liberation per se but who wanted to stigmatize the whole Cuban revolution by highlighting its shameful treatment of homosexuals. Ironically, in retrospect, one could say that their film and the furor against Cuba that it caused may have contributed to positive change in Cuba.[1]

As *GAY CUBA* documents, the last 10-12 years have been ones of increasing progress for gay life in Cuba. In 1986 the Cuban government began to reevaluate its policies towards homosexuals and in 1988 repealed public ostentation laws in force since 1938. In 1988 police were ordered to stop harassing people based on appearance; the law now only prohibited homosexual acts based on violence and coercion. One lesbian in the film jokes about kissing her lover in front of police to see their reaction. Toward the film's conclusion, Jorge Cortines of the International

Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission asserts that Cuba poses no more of a problem than does the U.S., whereas many other Latin American countries formally and informally continue to persecute homosexuals. Thus physical gay bashing, practically unknown in Cuba, has reached epidemic proportions in countries like Brazil and Mexico and it is common here.

Much of GAY CUBA stresses everyday interactions among gay and non-gay Cubans. We see Miguel Sosa, a union leader in his factory and an elected delegate to the local government, with his coworkers and with his lover in their neighborhood. We meet another factory worker who is also a well-known drag queen. We see drag performances at evening fiestas organized by a CDR (neighborhood Committee for the Defense of the Revolution). And we see Pablo Milanes, who spend time in a work camp in the 1960s, dedicate his gay-positive song, "The Original Sin," at a public performance to "all gays and people who suffer in the world." Lyrics include the lines,

"Two souls
two bodies
two men who love each other
are going to be expelled from the paradise
in which they were destined to live.[2]

The film ends on gay/lesbian contingents at a Jose Martí and a May Day parade.

The film also takes up the issue of AIDS and Cuba's original policy of quarantining HIV positive people, which ended in 1993. The central figure here is an HIV positive doctor, now an AIDS educator, who talks about growing from hopelessness to activism within a sanitarium. For a variety of reasons, including homophobia, the Cuban government overreacted to the first signs of the AIDS but then with more information and experience altered its policies. The film includes impressive statistics. Out of a population of 11 million, less than 1,200 people tested HIV positive by 1995 (over half are heterosexual) and only 250 have died. These statistics, even if exaggerated, are astounding, given the ravages of this disease around the world in the last 15 years.

Finally, this film, supported by recent writing about sexuality in Cuba, documents in an engaging way the enormous changes that have taken place in Cuba since 1959.

NOTES

1. We must realize how complex issues of sexuality and change in Cuba are. For example, 1979 saw two contradictory public policies enacted. The Penal code of 1979 included harsh penalties for public homosexual behavior. At the same time, the National Task Force for Sexual Education published in Spanish an East German textbook on sexuality which included a chapter on homosexuality, stating:

"Homosexuality cannot be classified as a sickness; rather it must be seen as a variant sexuality. Homosexuals do not 'suffer' from sexuality; they suffer from the difficulties that their condition causes them in society."

Quoted in Marvin Leiner, *Sexual Politics in Cuba: Machismo, Homosexuality, and AIDS* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) 45.

2. The full lyrics in Spanish and English are in Ian Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) 209-210.

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Remembering Titón

by Michael Chanan

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In the thirty-five years of Cuban cinema, since the Revolution created a film industry where previously there had only been a sporadic succession of individual films, no director has been as self-consistent an author as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, yet no director conforms less to the conventional notion of what a cinematic author is.

Titón (his lifelong nickname) was not to be associated with any particular genre but encompassed many, though he had a special bent for satire — both dramatic as in *LA ULTIMA CENA* and comic as in *LAS DOCE SILLAS*, *LA MUERTE DE UN BUROCRATA*, *LOS SOBREVIVIENTES* and *GUANTANAMERA*. He is not associated with any particular stylistic tendency but again was master of many. All his films are shot through with an intense quality of documentary reality: he never forgot the lessons about neorealism that were taught at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome, where he studied film at the start of the 50s.

From the imperfect achievement of his first feature, *HISTORIAS DE LA REVOLUCION*, by way of contemporary reality in *MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESARROLLO* and *HASTA CIERTO PUNTO* and historical reality in *UNA PELEA CUBANA CONTRA LOS DEMONIOS* and *LA ULTIMA CENA*, to the comic but disconcerting vision of his last film, *GUANTANAMERA*, the stories he tells belong in a social world in which the camera, like the protagonists, is enveloped. Above all, his films are not like those of, say, Hitchcock or Antonioni, a steady progression towards total mastery which eventually plays itself out. His last two films, *FRESA Y CHOCOLATE* and *GUANTANAMERA*, are original artistic creations which break new ground and are also quite different from each other in ways which evoke, but do not repeat, earlier films (like *MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESARROLLO* and *LA MUERTE DE UN BUROCRATA*).

The idea of the author in cinema is a slippery one. It was proposed after the Second World War by the French New Wave directors — the same generation as Titón — when they were militant young film critics before they became directors in order to reclaim for their own the Hollywood film makers whom they most admired. According to the future directors of the French New Wave, certain Hollywood directors were not just craftsmen of commercial entertainment genres, but they had the same concerns as the literary author, the same right to serious consideration. Others responded that it isn't always the director who was the

author of the film in this sense; it might be the cinematographer or scriptwriter or maybe the producer, or else a combination of them. After all, cinema is a collaborative art. Yet other writers pointed out that it might also be the producer in the industrial sense — not the individual but the studio. Actually, all these variations on the theme of authorship are relevant to Titon's case. He shared his authorship gladly with his collaborators and was happy that this included the Cuban film institute, ICAIC, which he saw not as an impersonal production house which happened to be his employer but as an artistic community to which he owed the very possibility of making films.

Nor did he regard the political nature of cinema in Cuba, with the complex demands this makes on the individual, as an unwelcome element in this equation. On the contrary, Titón was a deeply political being who not only embraced the political domain but turned the camera on the very problems in which he felt himself to be immersed (implicitly in *MEMORIAS DE SUBDESARROLLO*, explicitly in *HASTA CIERTO PUNTO*, where the protagonists are filmmakers). To do this and get away with it, you need detachment; otherwise the viewer is likely to smell insincerity. This detachment is the key to both Titón's aesthetics and his politics. In other words, his politics were those of a committed but independent spirit, while his aesthetics leaned towards humor, reason and objectivity. Titón prized neither emotive self-expression nor providing the viewer with an emotional bath.^[1][\[open notes in new window\]](#) His films function like the writings of a contemporary historian who does not know the outcome of the history he is writing but constantly delves back into the past in order to try and understand its nature. In his vision of the past he sees an allegory of what things have become.

It was such a film, *UNA PELEA CUBANA CONTRA LOS DEMONIOS*, the furthest back in historical reconstruction that has been undertaken by any Cuban film, which gave me the idea that I proposed to him in 1982. He thought about it for a year and then decided that yes, it was for him: an adaptation of Shakespeare's last play, *THE TEMPEST*, which would be turned inside out and told from the point of view of Caliban, Prospero's slave and the first black character in the history of English theatre. We followed Woody Allen's advice, that you have to have more than an idea for a film, you have to have a concept. This film, entitled *CALIBAN*, would be an historical costume drama shot on a tropical island, Cuba, but in English, with English and Caribbean actors. And we almost got to make it too!

We obtained joint support for script development from Channel Four in London and ICAIC in Havana, and then found an independent European producer — a Norwegian — who was ready to put up what we needed to make up the budget (which worked out in sterling to £1.5m, or around \$2.6m at the time). An English colleague, Holly Aylett, joined me to produce the film. I went to Havana in mid-1984 to write the script with Titón and the playwright Eugenio Hernandez. We quickly agreed on the outline. We analyzed both the play and Aimée Cesaire's twentieth century version and decided that in our case, Caliban and Ariel would both be black. They would meet — which they never do in the original — and argue about how best to deal with Prospero, their master and oppressor.

There were two or three other elements in the adaptation. First, we would redo the masque; instead of drawing on characters taken from Latin mythology, it would become a convocation of the gods of the Island, which in this version means the

Afro-Cuban mythology of Yoruba origin. This scene was written by Eugenio in Spanish and gave me hell trying to translate it. The dialogue between Caliban and Ariel, on the other hand, was written in contemporary Caribbean English. This let me off the hook in the face of the enormous difficulty of writing contemporary speech to fit around Shakespeare's poetry, but as I also told Titón, I had recently seen Shakespearean productions in England in which black actors spoke the verse in a Caribbean lilt, and it sounded wonderful. We agreed that it would be the music of the actors' speech that would carry the film across the gap between Shakespeare's language and ours. To prepare myself for this enormous task, I spent a week immersed in the poems of Linton Kwesi Johnson and others. I then had the benefit of advice from George Lamming, who was happily on a visit to Cuba, and kindly went through the script with me.

We also sought to keep the ending open by having alternative, parallel conclusions. There was a problem here: you have to end on Prospero's final speech. We thought it might work if we transported him to present day Cuba and he delivered it walking along the Malecón, but Titón wasn't sure. The key, as Titón put it, was that our Caliban was not a monster but a human being; the true monster was Prospero, who enslaved Caliban. From the very beginning, Titón was very clear about the enormous sense of malevolence which an actor needed in order to play Prospero's part as he saw it, but his first choice surprised me: Michael Caine. I had to tell him it was impossible. Caine is a political reactionary who lives in Los Angeles and would cost millions. Taking the point without demur, he immediately came up instead with the name of Robert de Niro. De Niro, who obligingly turned up on a trip to London, expressed polite interest. He never actually said no, and we knew his agreement would solve all our financial problems. Who wouldn't stump up the cash to have him play a character out of Shakespeare?

When we decided we couldn't wait for DeNiro's decision any longer, Titón paid a memorable visit to London to begin serious casting. Among the actors we were considering for the part of Prospero, Titón met Anthony Hopkins, Steven Berkoff and Jonathan Price. And then the project fell through. Our backer had also put up half the money for Hugh Hudson's epic REVOLUTION, produced by David Puttnam's company Goldcrest, which had taken upon its shoulders the renaissance of British cinema. When Hudson's picture went over budget — by fully three times the amount we needed for CALIBAN — it not only contributed to Goldcrest's subsequent downfall when the film flopped, but our backer pulled out. At such a late stage, no one else could be found to step in. Film financiers are suspicious bastards.

We also planned, at the beginning of the film, a short documentary sequence which recounted the origins of Shakespeare's play: how he turned for the first time to a contemporary source and drew on first-hand accounts of people he knew who were involved in financing Sir Walter Raleigh's first voyage of exploration to Virginia — that voyage ended in disaster when some of the ships were wrecked in the Bermudas ("the sweet-vexed Bermoothes" in the play). We would also mention the historical evidence that some of the crew on the ships were black Africans. To gather ideas for this sequence we took a trip to Stratford-upon-Avon, passing through Oxford on the way back, which Titón enjoyed enormously. On this trip he had the idea for this opening sequence of a little piece of self-satire: as with the Jose Martí busts at the opening of LA MUERTE DE UN BUROCRATA, we would

show the manufacture of Shakespeare busts and other touristic knick-knacks.

I do not remember talking about it, but it was clear to me that we shared a vision of a kind of Brechtian cinema. Despite the appearance of a costume piece, *CALIBAN* was conceived in the spirit of Brecht's own rewriting of Shakespeare combined with Jan Kott's idea of "Shakespeare, Our Contemporary." What we did talk about a lot was the music, which was obviously critical. We agreed we didn't want to use the original settings of the songs nor anything that smacked of soupy violins and sentimentality. Of course, Titón just laughed at the record I played him of incidental music for the play written by the English Victorian composer Sullivan. I was delighted when he was much taken by the music of one of our leading British composers, Peter Maxwell Davies, who had once generously written some music for a short campaign documentary which I had made more than ten years earlier. I asked Davies if it would interest him and he said in theory yes, but his diary was full with commissions for at least two years. The question of a composer was still wide open when the project collapsed.

Titón took it philosophically. He had no illusions about the degree to which, as a Latin American and a Cuban, the odds were stacked against him. In the same way he was philosophical about misinterpretations of his work which regularly cropped up — when Andrew Sarris, for example, described him as a dissident, a kind of Cuban Solzhenitsin, for *MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESARROLLO*; or he was criticized for *LA ULTIMA CENA* because it wasn't a contemporary subject; or for not being political when he chose to make a simple love story in *CARTAS DEL PARQUE*. What such critics — left or right as the case may be — would have made of *CALIBAN* one can only guess.

For Titón, I am sure, one of the enticing prospects of the project was the opportunity to work with leading Anglo-American actors. Of those we saw, his preferred Prospero was Anthony Hopkins (though Hopkins turned it down), in whom Titón envisaged something of the same character that Hopkins brought to the screen a few years later in *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. Looking back I realize that it was primarily through his conceptualization of the characters that the film took shape in Titón's mind. Another key decision concerned Miranda. The one thing she would not be was anything like Hollywood's idea of young virginity, nor would she be an "English Rose" type. This was to be a girl on the brink of puberty, puzzled and awkward at her discoveries. I realized that Titón did not think in stereotypical characters or situations, any more than he simply told stories, but rather he analyzed them in the telling. He always sought actors with the complex understanding of character which is needed in order to pull this off. Together with them he created some of the most remarkable and memorable characters to be found not just in Cuban but also Latin American cinema: Sergio Corrieri in *MEMORIAS DE SUBDESARROLLO*, José Antonio Rodríguez in *UNA PELEA CUBANA CONTRA LOS DEMONIOS*, Nelson Villagra in *LA ULTIMA CENA*, Mirta Ibarra in *HASTA CIERTO PUNTO*, Jorge Perugorria in *FRESA Y CHOCOLATE*. I am sure that the power of characters like these is also one of the reasons for the popularity which Titón's films have often enjoyed, some of them abroad as well as in Cuba.

If some of these films were denied such success, it is not necessarily a mark of aesthetic failure but primarily a certain truth about films and audiences:

sometimes one makes the other, but at other times the lines of communication are not so direct. This is inevitable if your aim is to make films about ideas, which is a constant in Titón's career. The mark of his achievement is that in films like MEMORIAS DE SUBDESARROLLO, LA ULTIMA CENA and FRESA Y CHOCOLATE, he not only pulls the audience into a film of ideas on the hook of the central protagonist, but he does this through a character whom he doesn't actually expect them to like, given the nature of popular social prejudices. Sergio is a white petit-bourgeois dilettante in the middle of a popular socialist revolution; the Count in LA ULTIMA CENA is an imperious land- and slaveowner; Diego is a gay intellectual, although in this case the problem is with official rather than popular prejudice. These characters are so fully and intensely drawn that honest human sympathy sucks the viewer along.

Titón uses this trait, which everyone brings with them into the cinema, to make demands on the spectators, to induce them to think as well as to surrender to the screen. When I asked him once how MEMORIAS DE SUBDESARROLLO, a film of enormous narrative sophistication, became such a success with Cuban audiences, which were brought up on Hollywood, he said it was because it intrigued them. He always made it his habit to go and watch his films in the cinemas anonymously to learn about audiences' responses to them. By this means, he told me, he discovered that people were going back to see the film a second and third time because it stuck in their minds, which pulled them back to the cinema. This is the kind of cinema we all need.

Titón's cinema is also one of personal exorcism played out through satire. He told me he made LA MUERTE DE UN BUROCRATA because he sometimes used to shake with anger at the stupidities of the new bureaucracy which the Revolution itself had created; he needed to work it through. Sergio in MEMORIAS DE SUBDESARROLLO is obviously his own alter ego. And in his last film, GUANTANAMERA, the private subject of the film is clearly his own approaching death. But one feels that he chose these subjects within himself because he sensed that they coincided with popular experience. No comment is needed on the experience of bureaucratic muddles, except to recount another personal memory. I once went with him on one of his anonymous forays to the cinema to see LA MUERTE DE UN BUROCRATA in Old Havana. He told me that at one of the film's first showings a woman had run out in the middle in tears. Following her to find out what had upset her, he discovered that the joke he thought he had invented — a body which has to be exhumed to recover the man's labor card so his widow can claim her pension — was something that had actually happened.

In MEMORIAS DE SUBDESARROLLO popular interest came from the fact that what intellectuals in Latin America call the "desgarramiento," the rupture, a breakdown of the familiar vocabulary of existence in the face of revolutionary change, is not their monopoly; everyone is confronted with the same problem of the need for the personal reconstruction of values. In FRESA Y CHOCOLATE and GUANTANAMERA, without pulling any punches Titón succeeded in articulating the popular experience of the Revolution in the more difficult times of the 1990s.

A process of aesthetic exorcism and working through also traverses these films. CUMBITE, which I know Titón liked the least among his oeuvre, seems to me a kind of farewell to neorealism, a cool, almost anthropological vision of Haiti, which

in Cuba was hardly possible any longer because the society was changing so dramatically and rapidly. Half the pleasure of *LA MUERTE DE UN BUROCRATA* is its homage to U.S. comedy, which has always, of course, constituted a tradition of subversion. If the country where these events take place is thus a hilarious mixture of revolutionary Cuba and the Hollywood land of comedy, it is also Kafkaesque territory.[2] *MEMORIAS DE SUBDESARROLLO* is a film which clearly talks back to the cinema of Titón's own generation in the French New Wave about the dangers of literary self-consciousness; and Edmundo Desnoës, author of the novella on which it was based, significantly called it a "creative betrayal" of its source.

UNA PELEA CUBANA is in dialogue, on a conscious level Titón told me, with Glauber Rocha. Unwittingly it also addresses the film by Nelson Pereira dos Santos which is the furthest back in historical reconstruction that has been attempted in Brazilian cinema, *COMO ERA GOSTOSO O MEU FRANCES*. The two films were shot around the same time, each unknown to the other. Between them they represent by far the most imaginative visualizations of the origins of modern Latin America to be found in Latin American cinema. *LA ULTIMA CENA* completes the work on the history of slavery in which Titón was engaged when he collaborated with Sergio Giral on *EL OTRO FRANCISCO*, bringing *LA ULTIMA CENA* together with his life-long admiration for Luis Buñuel's black humor and anti-clericalism. Then there was his support for Sara Gómez, first, when he worked together with Julio García Espinosa to complete her film *DE CIERTA MANERA* after she died during the editing, and then, speaking to Gómez' film in his own *HASTA CIERTO PUNTO*. In *FRESA Y CHOCOLATE*, the dialogue is with Nestor Almendros, with whom he made amateur 8mm films in his university days; it is an answer to the latter's *IMPROPER CONDUCT*, which Titón called "a piece of socialist realism in reverse, a manipulation of reality in the service of political propaganda." [3]

Like all his films, this sense of dialogue with others is not preconceived and is sometimes only partly conscious, except that Titón knew perfectly well it is always going on, and that this is what the artist's speech is about, for he found himself doing it to himself — making impromptu self-allusions. These self-references are not deliberate, he said when an interviewer drew his attention to the phenomenon, they arise spontaneously in the same way certain ideas come up in the course of a conversation.[4] The conversation may be with others or with your own inner voice — the effect is the same.

Nevertheless, in *FRESA Y CHOCOLATE*, the conversation with Almendros was, as Titón admitted, inevitable. Almendros died shortly before the film began shooting; he died of cancer, and Titón had just been diagnosed with the same disease. After the huge effort, under these circumstances, of shooting what was clearly a very demanding film (with the help of Juan Carlos Tabío, the most selfless of all Titón's collaborators), the huge success it met with both at home and abroad gave him the chance for one last shot. Returning to a script he had put aside a couple of years earlier, he seized the moment to exorcise his private experience one last time, to joke about death in the teeth of it. If this, once again, requires detachment and a proper sense of proportion, *GUANTANAMERA* (with Tabío again as his co-director) is not about his private death but a death which everyone in Cuba is afraid of going through: the threat of the demise of the socialist dream, which somehow miraculously has survived the collapse of the Communist states of Eastern Europe.

Unquestionably a wistful film but not one of resignation and negativity, the dialogue with death turns into a dialogue with a dream of life: at its heart is a popular legend, speaking of mortality and the vigor of the young, to whom the old must learn to give way. The legend is at the same time Titón's own farewell to life.

NOTES

1. He was not at all an unemotional person but never wore his heart on his sleeve; characteristically, the music he liked best is emotionally discreet and controlled, though very intense.

2. According to Jose Antonio Evora, Virgilio Piñera is credited with the observation: "If Kafka had been a Cuban, instead of a writer of the absurd, he would have been 'un escritor costumbrista.'" Jose Antonio Evora, ed., *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*, Colección Huesca de Cine, 6, 1994, p.156.

3. This observation comes from an interview with Titón which I recorded in Madrid in 1994, for a book on his work to be published by Flicks Books. Almendros came to Cuba with his parents as political refugees from Spain but abandoned Cuba very soon after the Revolution came to power; he used his reputation as a cinematographer to produce a documentary on gay repression in Cuba, which presented a highly tendentious version of the truth. In England, Channel Four declined to buy the film because, as I was privately told, they believed it had been partly funded by the CIA.

4. In Evora, op.cit., p.57.

Spilling out onto Castro Street

by Marc Siegel

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"Because [we] approach these places [lesbian and gay film festivals] with a presumption of community, no matter how fictional, these become cultural spaces that can change our relationship to the screen. Our identities are constituted as much in the event as in the images we watch." — Martha Gevers^[1][\[open notes in new window\]](#)

When I began thinking about the relationship between questions of identity and lesbian and gay film festivals,^[2] I found myself returning to Stuart Hall's well-known essay on cinema and cultural identity.^[3] Hall's reflections on, for example, the various presences which position Caribbean cultural identities have always seemed to offer rich possibilities for discussing the process of identity formation in relation to various cultural objects — films, photos, books, and perhaps even film festivals. But I have often been perplexed by the role played by cinema, by cinematic representation, in Hall's essay, which is, after all, entitled "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation." Of course I understand that cinema functions as one particular mode of representation within which identity is constituted:

"Not as second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists but as that form of representation which is also able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects and thereby enable us to discover who we are" (72).

But Hall speaks as well of language and the ways we are positioned by the names we give ourselves, those strategic and arbitrary closures necessary for one to produce meaning and identities out of the infinite stream of language.

What then is particular about cinema to this conception of identity? Hall does not so much as mention any particular film in this discussion of cinematic representation. I note this not in order to raise the argument that cultural studies scholars don't or won't or can't do close readings of specific texts. For Hall does discuss specific works in this essay. They are just not films. According to him, the best examples of the conception of cultural identity that he wants to discuss "come across vividly, not yet in the Caribbean cinemas but in other texts" (73) Here he discusses the photographs and texts of Tony Sewell and Derek Bishton.

But not just these photos are the occasion for Hall's essay and its profound reflections on identity. Instead, another major impetus was probably the shock of

similarity and difference that Hall experienced when he, a Jamaican, returned to Martinique from his adult home in England for the first Caribbean film festival in 1988. Thus a film festival played a quiet, yet significant role as inspiration for Hall's thoughts. Following Martha Gever, we could say that entering the festival with a "presumption of community" may have offered Hall an opportunity for a re-evaluation not only of the importance of cinematic representation to identity, but of the very content of identity itself.

"Our identities are constituted as much in the event as in the images that we watch."

Gever's argument makes explicit not only cinema's mediatory role in constructing identity but that of film festivals as well. Utilizing Hall's essay, she reflects on how lesbian identity is negotiated through participation in various community events, namely lesbian/gay pride celebrations and film festivals.

What is this event? What constitutes the event of the lesbian and gay film festival? And what identities are produced within such an event? To begin to answer these questions we need to shift our attention away from a discussion of any particular spectator's relationship to any individual film to a consideration of the spectator/consumer/ community member's involvement at every level of festival activity, from purchasing tickets to attending parties to cruising the lines to milling about in the lobby to spilling out onto Castro Street.

In the following discussion I pull most of my examples from one festival, the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. This is the oldest — now in its 21st year — and largest lesbian and gay film festival in the world and has in many ways influenced the evolution of other festivals. It has also been the occasion for the majority of my festival participation. This essay is divided into two sections. I begin by emphasizing the relationship between Frameline's festival and pre-existent community structures. In the second section, I focus on the centrality of cinema to the identities that are produced by lesbian and gay film festivals.

SPILLING OUT ONTO CASTRO STREET

From its earliest days, the San Francisco lesbian and gay film festival was linked to an emergent gay political movement. As Susan Stryker points out, the loose group of gay filmmakers who came together to organize the "Gay Film Festival of Super-8 films" in San Francisco in 1977 were both directly and indirectly associated with Harvey Milk and his campaign to become the first openly gay elected official.[4] Milk's camera shop in the Castro was the place where the young filmmakers took their film to be developed. Two of the organizers of the first fest, photographers Dan Nicoletta and David Waggoner, actually worked in Milk's shop. The first festival was held on February 9, 1977 at the Gay Community Center at 32 Page Street. Stryker describes the event as follows:

The organizers plastered the city with handbills announcing a free screening of their work, and the event succeeded wildly. Two hundred people crowded into a room meant to accommodate a hundred twenty-five, and a hundred more were turned away at the door. In spite of the film splices breaking repeatedly and an unpopular no-tobacco-smoking policy, the response was so overwhelmingly favorable that a second expanded and equally well-attended show was scheduled

for March 13 at the other larger community center at 330 Grove Street. (3)

This loose group of filmmakers soon organized themselves into a collective called "Persistence of Vision," which went on to become the non-profit organization called "Frameline" in 1979. After the first year's screenings, the festival date was moved to June to make it coincide with San Francisco's yearly Stonewall commemoration. For its first few years the festival was actually sponsored by the Pride Foundation, the same group that organized the yearly Gay Pride March down Market Street. At this early stage in its development the Gay Film Festival (Frameline didn't add the word lesbian to the title until 1982) was clearly contextualized within a larger, somewhat established, gay political community. Festival involvement thus became associated with the politics and identity of San Francisco's Gay Liberation movement.

Since 1979 the festival had been held primarily at the Roxie theater, a small space of about 275 seats in the Mission District, San Francisco's traditionally working-class and now predominantly Latino neighborhood. In 1981, for the fifth festival, the main venue became the Castro theater, a grand old movie palace built in 1922 and seating 1500. While this shift dramatically increased the festival's scope — which expanded in one year from one sold-out night at the Roxie to a week of sold-out Castro and Roxie shows — the existence of two very different venues (these are still the two main spaces) also meant films could be divided along a number of axes: feature films vs. shorts, conventional narrative or documentary vs. experimental, films presumed to be of general community interest vs. those for a more specialized audience, and, perhaps most significantly, gay vs. lesbian.

The association of lesbian concerns with the smaller, less fashionable venue, the Roxie, came about for a number of reasons. The Roxie is closer to some of the more important women's institutions in the city — the Women's Building, Old Wives Tales Bookstore, and Oseto Baths. But, as Stryker notes, since most lesbian filmmakers at the time produced less technically-finished products than their male counterparts, their work was already destined for the Roxie, the venue for most experimental work. Together with the screening committee's reluctance to program the few available lesbian features, these factors combined to create the impression that lesbians were of secondary importance to the festival.

In 1986 lesbian discontent with Frameline exploded in what has come to be known as the "Lesbian Riot." The catalyst for the explosion was the screening one evening of Midi Onodera's *TEN CENTS A DANCE (PARALLAX)* at the close of a lesbian shorts program at the Roxie.[5] *TEN CENTS A DANCE* is a 30-minute film divided into three sections, each of which depicts two people either discussing, having, or discussing as having sex. In the first section, two women at a dinner table in a Japanese restaurant discuss the possibilities of having a sexual relationship together. In the second, two men have sex in the stalls of a public bathroom. The final section features a man and a woman having phone sex. Shot with a static camera in real time, each scene is also divided into two adjacent spaces by the use of a split screen.

At the Roxie that evening, the film progressed no further than the second section, the one depicting male-male sex, when some women in the audience became incensed. They stormed out of the theater, yelling and disrupting the screening for the other audience members. Frameline, whose staff was verbally harassed during

the riot, responded with a community forum a few months later on lesbian representation within the festival.

I mention this series of incidents because it highlights a number of concerns central to a discussion of the construction of community through the event of the festival. It is not surprising that Onodera's film should serve as the spark for a riot around questions of lesbian representation. In her acute analysis, Judith Mayne for instance reads the film as a kind of rallying cry to women. She discusses it as one example of those films that

"affirm the necessity and the vitality of conversations between women — conversations where impossible ideals of 'simple' communication and impermeable boundaries of rigid isolation are both put to the test."
[6]

For Mayne, Onodera's use of the split screen throughout the film enables her to align the positions of lesbian desire with those of gay male anonymous sex and heterosexual phone sex. The film thereby

"brackets any simple notion of lesbian desire as isolated from other forms of sexual desire." (228)

This strategy of establishing an affiliation between various sexualities runs counter to the programming practices of the Frameline fest (and most other lesbian and gay film festivals for that matter), which to a large degree serve to reproduce pre-existing gender and sexual divisions through, to pick the most obvious example, the segregation of lesbian from gay films.[7] The reaction to *TEN CENTS A DANCE* thus cannot be fully understood outside of its festival context, namely that it was screened on a lesbian shorts evening at the Roxie by a festival programming committee already perceived as indifferent to lesbian concerns.

While the occurrence of the riot does attest to a kind of failure of "simple communication," it did succeed in motivating Frameline to engage with community concerns about its programming practices. This subsequently resulted in Frameline's greater sensitivity to not only lesbian representation within the festival and within its own organization, but also to its increased concern with minority representation in general. Finally, this level of interaction between audiences, films, and programmers is precisely what marks the lesbian and gay film festival as a community event.

Over the years Frameline's response to community demand for minority representation has resulted in special evenings, often held at the Roxie, focusing on issues relating to, for example, Jews, lesbians of color, Latin Americans, transgendered people, Soviets, bisexuals, and Native Americans. These programs unfortunately function to isolate minoritarian concerns from the concerns of a presumed majority of festival goers and as such can be seen as Frameline's attempt to respond to contemporary identity politics with its own brand of liberal multiculturalism. There is also an economic factor at work here. Due to decreasing government support, Frameline has become more dependent on corporate sponsorship for the festival. These sponsors are often community businesses or organizations who extend their support to individual programs that in return reflect back the sponsor's identity. Hence, the bisexual evening was sponsored by

the Bay Area Bisexual Network, the transgendered evening by FTM, the international organization for female to male transexuals, etc.

While it is essential that the festival address these concerns as part of the field of queer identities, this segregation of works by identity has some unfortunate effects. In the case of the 1995 festival's transgendered evenings, the programmers apparently confronted a lack of transgendered films/ videos, yet still wanted to respond to a desire for transgender representation in the festival. As there was a sponsor for a program of such work, the committee pulled together an assortment of images of transsexuals, butch lesbians, and drag kings and queens. For those of us interested in transgendered issues, those of us already thinking transgender in relation to our own gender identity, the program was relatively interesting. Yet, those who attended the boys' shorts programs instead were treated to a more sanitized, less expansive vision of gay male sexuality, one cleansed of images of drag queens, transsexual men, and butch lesbians.

I mention this example in order to qualify the assertion that lesbian and gay festivals are sites for community debate, safe spaces where queer political concerns can be debated within the community. For while this certainly can be the case, as the existence of many panel and theater lobby discussions attest, there are also ways in which the festival, by replicating pre-existent community structures — be they community political organizations or exhibition venues — fosters divisions and inhibits debate as well.

QUEER FILM FESTIVALS CAN TEACH US HOW TO DO QUEER READINGS!

In an article on queer film festivals in Australia, Samantha Searle emphasizes some of the advantages obtained by such festivals through the very presumption of identity that I was just critiquing. Influenced by Gever, Searle notes that the

"naming of festival events as queer and the assumption of a 'freed' space and shared collective identity shift the range of ways in which films and videos can be read." [8]

Her example is the screening at an Australian queer film festival of Elia Kazan's *PINKY* (1949), a film about black people passing for white. The film was introduced by Cindy Patton, whose words backed by her stature as a queer scholar helped make explicit the possible connections for queer audiences between race, gender, and sexuality.

Queer film festivals have often provided explicit contextualization for those films which are not immediately read as queer. In addition to Searle's example, there are the many film/video clip presentations that are among the most popular of festival events: Vito Russo's 1980 *The Celluloid Closet* presentation, and, more recently, Henry Jenkins on Queers and "Star Trek," B. Ruby Rich on "Kids in the Hall," and Judith Halberstam and Jenni Olson's "A Rough Guide to Butches in Film." Attendance at one of these programs moreover is certainly not the only way for festival goers to develop queer reading skills. For mere participation in these queer events presents an opportunity, an occasion for interaction with other queers that can function to reorient one's film viewing experience.

In his review of the 1988 New York Gay and Lesbian Experimental Film Festival,

Tom Kahn notes that during both of the screenings of a film which contemplated 1970s gay male sexuality

"an AZT beeper happened to go off in the audience, a signal not only to a person with AIDS to take medication but also a sign of just how long ago 1975 seems." [9]

In the context of a queer film festival, this beeper functioned as a kind of gesture that jarred Kahn's relation to the screen. This is a distancing effect not of the film itself, but of the festival film viewing experience. We can consider this beeper as an insistence on the importance of the place from which we watch. For a beeper only sounds like an AZT beeper to those who know that they are watching films with people with AIDS.

Perhaps then, entering a queer film festival may exemplify what Roland Barthes describes as the sole exception to the way in which we usually enter a movie theater.

"With one exception — a more and more frequent one, it is true — of a specific cultural quest (when a film is chosen, sought, desired, the object of a genuine anticipatory anxiety), we go to movies through sloth, out of an inclination for idleness." [10]

Judith Halberstam's remarks on the 1992 Frameline fest attest to the "anticipatory anxiety" experienced by the audience at one lesbian shorts program:

"This year's San Francisco festival had a carnival feel to it. Pressed together in dark rooms watching all kinds of lesbian bodies do all kinds of things to other lesbian bodies, one had the feeling of being at a kind of mass orgy. The audience was always a part of the show; never an idle group of zoned out spectators, these female gazers were constantly caught looking, enjoying, identifying, and generally getting off on an astounding array of new lesbian cinema." [11]

In Halberstam's account the place from which one watches becomes as important as what one sees. In this scenario, where film viewing combines with community interaction in the most erotic and tactile way, "spectators participate in the creation of new ways of seeing." (26)

The relation between queerness and cinema fostered by these film festivals can extend beyond film viewing to filmmaking as well. Over the years Frameline has hosted a number of panels on both practical and theoretical issues that offer guidance to new queer filmmakers. In conjunction with the festival, the Bay Area Video Coalition holds an open house to introduce queers to their digital video and audio editing facilities. Since 1993, Frameline has co-sponsored an evening of Safe Sex Erotic Video Awards, a program designed to encourage and recognize homemade safe sex videos. In a broader sense the mere existence of the festival as a congenial space for queer imagery acts as encouragement to queers to produce work. The importance of this community space of exhibition and interaction extends to more established filmmakers as well. Pratibha Parmar, for example, writes:

"For me having my work seen on the lesbian and gay film festival circuits, especially in the US, has been an absolute lifeline. The feedback really kept me going, and winning the Audience Award for KUSH as the Best Documentary Short at the Frameline Festival in San Francisco in June was a thrill. All the nightmares of shooting illegally in India suddenly became distant memories when I watched the film with the audience at that festival. It was a very special moment. To get that validation from your own peer group mattered much more than getting a great review from a critic. That kind of nurturing is very important. It's what kept me going." [12]

In recent years these festivals have faced a number of critical challenges. B. Ruby Rich has noted the irony that in 1992, the same year she was announcing the "New Queer Cinema," Frameline and two other lesbian and gay film festivals were defunded by the NEA. [13] As queer films and film festivals have become more popular and thus more visible, other film festivals have expressed interest in exhibiting this work as well. Hollywood has also taken an interest, attempting to pawn its so-called queer product off on the festival circuit. Los Angeles' OUTFEST has graciously accepted. In 1995, OUTFEST announced that its sneak preview slot, long a space for the premiere of eagerly awaited community-produced films (John Greyson's ZERO PATIENCE, for instance) will become the venue for special preview showings of Hollywood's new "queer" work.

In 1993 the San Francisco International Film Festival, held several months before Frameline's festival, was eager to feature Sally Potter's ORLANDO. It programmed the film in a high profile way, giving it the Satyajit Ray award. In response to concerned questions, Mark Finch, then Frameline's Festival Director noted,

"To ask why ORLANDO is not in the Frameline festival misses a point. ORLANDO is possible because of the range of images in this festival. We're here to show work that would otherwise not be seen." [14]

While this is certainly true for Frameline's festival, namely that the exhibition of a potentially more popular film like ORLANDO in another high profile local festival frees up valuable space for other challenging work, Finch's comments nevertheless only partially address the range of differences between the two fests. In 1994, for instance, both the S.F. International Film Festival and Frameline were bidding for the same film again, this time Gregg Bordowitz' FAST TRIP, LONG DROP, a film by a person with AIDS reflecting on mortality, activism, and ethnicity. This time Frameline won because it, as opposed to the other fest, was willing to pay for Bordowitz to travel to accompany the film on its San Francisco premiere. The S.F. International Festival was interested merely in the film itself, while for Frameline the range of images alone did not make for a successful event. Since Bordowitz had long been an important AIDS activist videomaker, his film as well as his personal appearance and interaction with the queer festival community were essential.

At a queer film festival, one finds therefore not only films but a festival of encounters, whether nostalgic, erotic, or informative which combine to create a particular film viewing experience. The identity that one affirms upon entering the festival can thus become redefined to include not merely a different relation to race, gender, or sexuality, but to cinema as well.

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY FILM FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS

1996

Best Feature — STONEWALL (Nigel Finch, Great Britain) — fictionalized account of six New Yorkers during the Stonewall Riots

Best Documentary — IT'S ELEMENTARY (Debra Chasnoff and Helen Cohan, US) — the efforts to incorporate gay and lesbian material into elementary school curricula

Best Short — MARGARET STAR: A FALL FROM GRACE (Annabelle Murphy, Australia) — after a break up, Margaret decides to become a wrestler

1995

Best Features — COSTA BRAVA (Marta Balletbò-Coll, Spain) — subtly understated comic love story between two women in Barcelona;
PARALLEL SONS (John G. Young, US) — encounter between a white artist and an African American prison escapee

Best Documentary — FICTION AND OTHER TRUTHS: A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT JANE RULE (Aerlyn Weissman, Lynne Fernie, Canada) — life of lesbian author/activist who fled McCarthyism for Canada

Best Shorts — THE PARTY FAVOR (Lisa Udelson, US) — comedy about a lesbian couple attending a suburban bridal shower;
TREVOR (Peggy Rajski, US) — 13year-old Diana Ross fan falls for hunky basketball teammate

Best Video — COMING OUT OF THE IRON CLOSET (Larry Peloso and Imre Sooaar, US) — interviews with activists and entertainers in several formerly Soviet countries

1994

Best Features — ONLY THE BRAVE (Ann Kokkinos, Australia) — hard edged drama about a girl and her high school gang;
WORLD AND TIME ENOUGH (Eric Mueller, US) — gen X comedy about an HIV positive artist and his garbage collecting boyfriend

Best Documentary — COMPLAINTS OF A DUTIFUL DAUGHTER (Deborah Hoffman, US) — personal interactions between a lesbian and her mother with Alzheimer's disease

Best Shorts — CARMELITA TROPICANA (Ela Troyano, US) — hilarious send up of ethnic identity by Puerto Rican lesbians;
A FRIEND OF DOROTHY (Raul O'Connell, US) — shy sophomore suffers a crush on his unattainable roommate

Best Video — SIS: THE PERRY WATKINS STORY (Chiqui Cartagena, US) — portrait of black gay man's successful fight against his Army discharge

1993

Best Feature — GRIEF (Richard Glatzer, US) — bittersweet behind-the-scenes comedy at a tacky daytime TV show

Best Documentary — ONE NATION UNDER GOD (Teodoro Maniaci and Francine Rzeznick, US) — the attempts at "curing" homosexuality from the 50s to the present

Best Shorts — INTREPIDISSIMA (Marta Balletbò-Coll, Spain) — humorous tale of a tomboy's resistance to dresses;

DEAF HEAVEN (Steve Levitt, US) — AIDS drama involving a young man and a Holocaust survivor

Best Short Documentary — CHICKS IN WHITE SATIN (Elaine Holliman, US) — the commitment ceremony of two Jewish lesbians

Best Video — HOMOTEENS (Joan Jubela, US) — diverse self-portraits of gay and lesbian New York adolescents

1992

Best Feature — TWIN BRACELETS (Yu-shan Huang, Hong Kong) — contemporary story of lesbian love in a traditional Chinese village

Best Documentary — CHANGING OUR MINDS: THE STORY OF DR. EVELYN HOOKER (Richard Schmiechen, US) — tribute to the pioneering psychoanalyst who fought against the attempts at curing homosexuality

Best Shorts — A CERTAIN GRACE (Sandra Nettelbeck, US) — a photographer leaves her boyfriend for a woman;

THE DEAD BOYS CLUB (Mark Christopher, US) — disco shoes transform a 90s nerd into a 70s dancing queen

Best Video — (IN)VISIBLE WOMEN (Ellen Spiro and Marina Alvarez, US) — portrait of HIV-positive Latinas

1991

Best Feature — TOGETHER ALONE (P. J. Castellaneta, US) — intimate bedtime discussion of love, sex, and AIDS

Best Documentary — THANK YOU AND GOODNIGHT (Jan Oxenberg, US) — idiosyncratic investigation into a family's adjustment to its grandmother's death

Best Short Documentary — KHUSH (Pratibha Parmar, Great Britain) — multifaceted depiction of life for South Asian lesbians and gays

Best Short — GIVE AIDS THE FREEZE (Cathy Joritz, Germany) — scratch film PSA of AIDS information

Best Video — AMERICAN FABULOUS (Reno Dakota, US) — fascinating feature-length car ride with storytelling Southern queen

1990

Best Feature — ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT (Beeban Kidron, Great Britain) — a young girl's complex coming out from a quirky religious community

Best Documentary — PARIS IS BURNING (Jennie Livingston, US) — celebratory investigation into voguing subculture of transgendered Blacks and Latinos

Best Short — FLAMES OF PASSION (Richard Kwietniowski, Great Britain) — beautiful, steamy brief encounter between two men on a train platform

Best Video — TONGUES UNTIED (Marion Riggs, US) — poetic, experimental rendering of the lives of Black gay men

1989

Best Feature — LA COEUR DECOUVERT (THE HEART EXPOSED) (Jean Yves Laforce, Canada, 1986) — romantic, family drama between older teacher and younger man

Best Documentary — OUT IN SUBURBIA (Pam Walton, US) — tribulations of coming out as lesbian in the suburbs

Best Short — RAY'S MALE HETEROSEXUAL DANCE HALL (Bryan Gordon, US) — gay man searches for a pal

1988

Best Feature — VENNER FOR ALTID (FRIENDS FOREVER) (Stefan Henszelman, Denmark) — charming coming-of-age story of three high school boys

Best Short — BERTRAND DISPARU (BERTRAND MISSING) (Patrick Mimouni, France) — the quirky friendship formed by a 12-year-old runaway

Best Video — THE WAR WIDOW (Paul Bogart, US) — period piece about the difficulties of a lonely WWI soldier's wife

Best Special Program — THE DAYS OF THE GREEK GODS: PHYSIQUE FILMS OF RICHARD FONTAINE — pioneering gay erotic films of the 40s and 50s

Annotations are based on the extensive listings in Jenni Olson's *The Ultimate Guide to Lesbian and Gay Film and Video* (New York: Serpent's Tail, 1996).

NOTES

1. Martha Gever, "The Names We Give Ourselves," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson, et al. (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), 191.

2. This essay was originally presented at the Society for Cinema Studies Conference, Dallas, TX, March 6, 1996. I would like to thank the other panel members, Gabriel Gomez and Kaucyila Brooke, and our gracious respondent, Chris Holmlund, for their comments. The staff at Frameline, in particular Michael Lumpkin, Amy Schoenborn, and Desi Del Valle, generously gave of their time and resources. Finally, a special thanks to UCLA's Queer Media Research Group, particularly Chon Noriega and Peter Limbrick.
3. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," *Framework* 36 (1989).
4. Susan Stryker, "Twenty Years of the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival," unpublished paper, (May, 1995), 2.
5. Onodera is an Asian Canadian filmmaker who recently made her first feature film, *SKIN DEEP* (1995).
6. Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 226.
7. This separation of lesbian and gay concerns, as evidenced for example by the yearly programming of lesbian films at competing times with gay films thereby forcing one to choose between them, continues as a festival norm, and facilitates the expression of the uglier side of gay men's relations with lesbians. In a nasty turn of events, the 1996 Frameline festival, which made positive strides toward including more lesbian work though by no means overturned the primacy of gay male work, was virulently attacked and boycotted by men in San Francisco's gay community, who felt betrayed by what they bizarrely perceived to be a predominantly lesbian festival.
8. Samantha Searle, "Film and Video Festivals: Queer Politics and Exhibition," *Meanjin* 55:1 (1996): 53.
9. Tom Kahn, "Identity Crisis: The Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival," *The Independent Film and Video Monthly* 12:1 (Jan.-Feb., 1989): 31.
10. Roland Barthes, "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater," *Apparatus*, ed. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (New York: Tanam Press, 1981), 1.
11. Judith Halberstam, "Some Like It Hot: The New Sapphic Cinema," *The Independent Film and Video Monthly* 15:9 (Nov., 1992): 26.
12. Joy Chamberlain, Isaac Julien, Stuart Marshall, and Pratibha Parmar, "Filling the lack in everyone is quite hard work, really" in *Queer Looks*, ed. Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (New York: Routledge, 1991), 50.
13. B. Ruby Rich, "New Queer Cinema," *Sight and Sound* 2:5 (Sept., 1992): 30.
14. Susan Gerhard, "The Queen of Festivals," *The Independent Film and Video Monthly* 17:2 (Mar., 1994): 29.